

Offia Oji, Ebonyi State

Update 26th September



EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR FAMILIES DISPLACED BY VIOLENT CONFLICT

- * FREE MEDICAL CARE FOR CHILDREN
- * SUPPORT FOR SEVERELY MALNOURISHED CHILDREN
- * FOOD AID TO FAMILIES WITH MALNOURISHED CHILDREN
- * RECONSTRUCTION

Background and Update



BACKGROUND

A violent communal conflict between communities in Cross River State and Ebonyi State erupted in Azu Offia, Edda in January this year and spread to Offia Oji, Okpuitumo in Abakaliki LGA of Ebonyi State, in May. It is essentially a land dispute caused by the borders drawn when Ebonyi State was created in 1996.

On 15 August the Offia Oji Health Center, which has been supported by AMURT since it opened in 2010, was attacked and burnt. Offia Oji Health Center has been consistently functioning at a high level averaging 43 deliveries a month since 2014. The loss of the health center is a significant blow to healthcare delivery in Ebonyi State. The dedicated local staff has now opened a temporary clinic in Egwuagu Secondary School.

The violence of the communal conflict with killings, raids and destructions of houses and farms has forced people to flee the frontline villages for safety in areas deeper inside Ebonyi State.

In the last week of August, health workers from Offia Oji and Ephuenyim Health Center documented 8354 displaced people from over 1236 living in Okpuitumo Ndeagu, the project areas of Offia Oji and Ephuenyim Health Centers.

These families are now Internally Displaced People, refugees in their own country. Forced to leave their homes and farms, they have lost their source for food and income, resulting in hunger and illness.

SECURITY UPDATE

Since early September the violence has been kept in check. There has been no further reports of gunfire or death. However, the tensions remain high in the frontline villages. Armed vigilantes still patrol on both sides. There are regular reports of intrusions into farming areas and there has been incidents of confrontations and exchanges.

From AMURT assessment covering 55 % of the displaced families, close to 40 % of the IDPs have returned to their homes. The majority has been unable to return as the security situation in the frontline villages is still not safe and 4-500 families have nowhere to go back to as their houses were burnt or demolished.

AMURT applied to Ebonyi State Government for security on the 17th of August. After first agreeing, the security later fell through as government was not ready to foot the bill demanded by police.

For more background details, read or download the 6 September report on the conflict:

www.anandamarga.org/pdf/news/africa/newsletters/WestAfricaSeptember2017.pdf

Assessing child malnutrition



The internally displaced families, with no access to their farms, are deprived of their source of food and income. The result has been an increase in hunger and sickness.

AMURT, with support from its sponsors, has started a food aid program, prioritizing the most needy families. Families with severely malnourished children qualify for food aid.

WHO (World Health Organization) uses weight for height indicators to calculate the 'Z Score' for classification of acute malnutrition. In the assessment we also measure upper arm circumference and document the age and condition for each displaced child.

Many more families have children with 'Z Score', indicating moderately malnourished children. If more resources are available these families should also benefit, preventing their children slipping from moderate to severe malnutrition.

AMURT doctors and staff working together with local health workers from Offia Oji and Ephuenyim Health Center, are still conducting assessment of the children of all the IDP families. As of 26 September 56 % of the IDP households have been visited. 19 % of displaced families have children with a Z score of -3, indicating severe malnutrition. These families have received food aid.



HOST VILLAGES ASSESSED 25 September 2017

Village name	Displaced Families Aug 21	Families returned Sept 25	Households assessed	Families w/ Severe Malnutrition
Egwuagu	192	80	112	27
Ohatekwe	186	133	53	9
Okwefurike	201	89	112	21
Ephugbo	56	15	41	15
Omego Ephugbo	51	26	25	5
Total	686	343	343	77

19 % households have severely malnourished children

40 % of displaced families have returned

Food aid for families

Family Food Pack

- * Rice – half bushel
- * Beans – two painters
- * Crayfish – one bowl
- * Oil – two bottles
- * Maggi – two packs
- * Salt – three packs



Medical Care for IDP children



Even in normal times, the children in rural Ebonyi State face many health challenges. Due to the violent communal conflict over 1200 families have been compelled to leave their homes. As a result they are more vulnerable to falling ill and contracting infectious diseases. The loss of their farms, their main source of food and livelihood, has led to hunger and deepened poverty. Cramped conditions far from home, have brought challenges of water and sanitation. As a result malaria, diarrhea, and infectious diseases, particularly in the youngest children, have increased. With malnutrition, the child's natural immunity and resistance is weakened. The loss of income makes the parents delay in taking their children to the health center for treatment for fear of payment.

To save lives, AMURT has subsidized children treatment in the project area since the conflict started in May. In September AMURT has purchased drugs and medical supplies for over USD 5,000 make available free treatment to all the IDP children at Ephuenyim and Offia Oji Health Centers.

The drugs comprise of 29 % antibiotics, 11 % anti-malaria (we also got anti-malaria drugs from the State Ministry of Health), Rehydration and infusions 19 %, consumable medical supplies (canola, syringes, cotton wool etc.), and 21 % others (analgesics, antipyretics, etc.). With these drugs and supplies children are treated for malaria, sepsis, respiratory infections, diarrhea, etc. without charge.



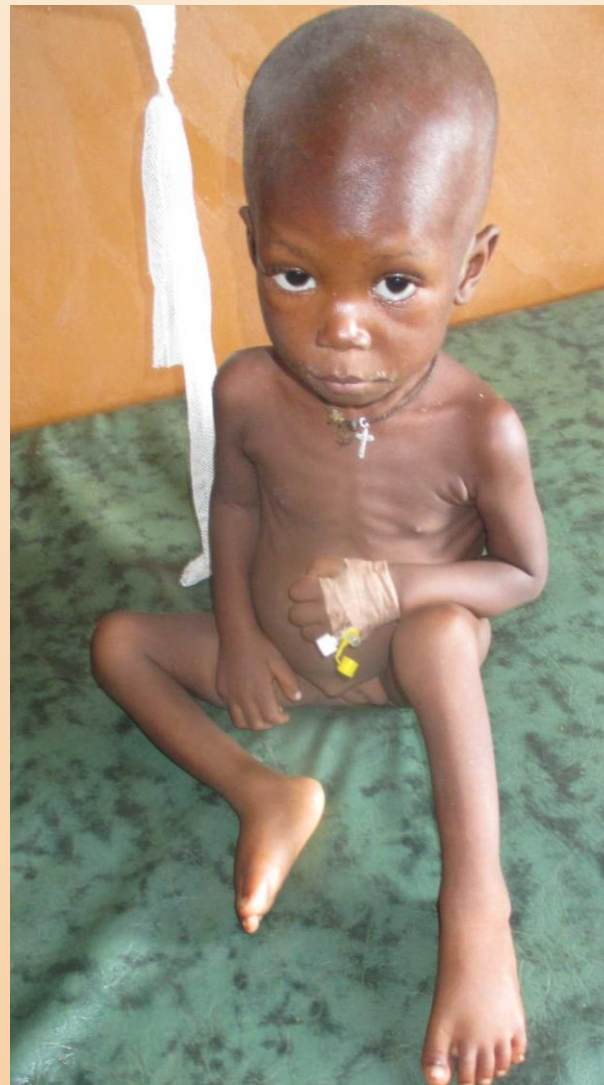
Managing severe malnutrition



The humanitarian crisis in Okpuitumo Ndeagu has seen a big rise in severe malnutrition cases. During the first three weeks of September, Ephuenyim Health Center had thirteen children on admission with very severe malnutrition.

The cases are indicated by a Z Score of minus 3 and are often accompanied by anemia and sepsis. The full treatment of these cases at Ephuenyim Health Center is now free, including supplemental feeding, treatment with antibiotics, transfusion and lab services. A dedicated health worker is in charge of each case. The admission time is normally 10-14 days. Upon discharge the family goes with one of the food aid packages.

The malnutrition is caused by the children being fed almost exclusively starch based foods like cassava and garri (cassava meal). They all show signs of protein deficiency. Some of the children can put on up to four kilos in a week.



5 Sept



18 Sept

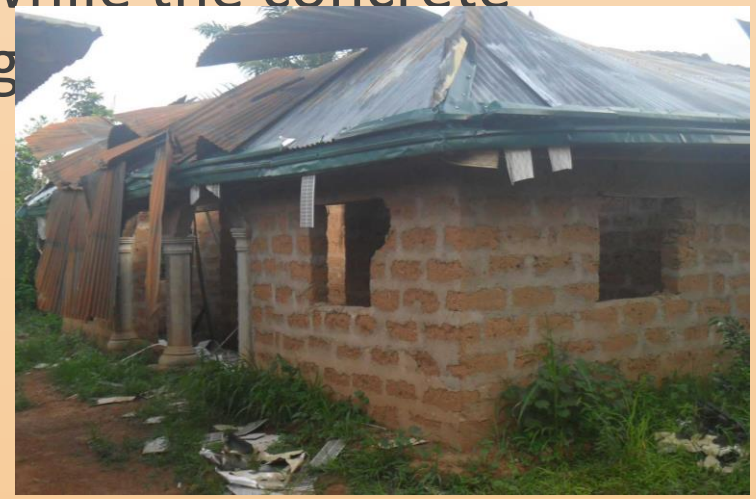


Reconstruction



In the assessment conducted in August, 501 displaced families reported that their houses had been burnt and destroyed. With peace prevailing the last weeks, many families have returned home. But the majority of families from Onuenyim, Azoji, Ofutu, Obeguigwe and Isophumini have not return due to the continued security challenges and loss of their homes. AMURT has visited Onuenyim, Azoge (photos above) and Obegigwe and Isphumini (photos below) to assess and document the many broken homes.

When the security situation improves, the families need to start repairing the homes. They need assistance. The mud block buildings have for the most part been completely destroyed, while the concrete



OFFIA OJI HEALTH CENTER DESTROYED

The closing of the Offia Oji Health Center is a huge blow to the local population. In recent years Offia Oji has seen more than 60 deliveries each October. It will be very hard to handle this volume in the temporary clinic. Reconstruction will start as soon as the security situation permits. We remain hopeful that government will follow through on its commitment to pay for the repairs sustained in the fire attack of 15th August.



With more resources we can save more lives



DONATIONS CAN BE MADE ONLINE THROUGH

AMURT GLOBAL OFFICE at www.amurt.net

AMURT UK at www.amurt.org.uk

AMURT ITALY at www.amurt.it

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE BY BANK TRANSFER

AMURT NORWAY

AMURT NIGERIA

Other AMURT chapters

Inquiries about the AMURT Nigeria Relief Effort, account information and other AMURT Nigeria Programs can be directed to:

Nigeria@amurt.net

Telephone: +234-81-3306-7130 – Dada Daneshananda, coordinator

For daily updates, photos, news and stories follow us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/AMURT-West-Africa

To read or download past AMURT Nigeria reports and newsletters:

www.anandamarga.org/category/news/africa/

To watch intro documentary on AMURT Nigeria programs on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOatqdpzYzI&t=216s