

Lagos flood killed my six-year-old daughter, left me homeless — Grieving father

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Grieving father, Ademola Oloyede

By Daniel Ayantoye

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Forty-two-year-old artisan, Ademola Oloyede, tells DANIEL AYANTOYE about the heartbreaking loss of his six-year-old daughter, Asabi, whose dream of becoming a singer was tragically cut short when she drowned after floodwaters from a torrential downpour engulfed their home in the Okeleye, Charity area of Lagos State

Your six-year-old daughter drowned in a recent flood. How did the tragedy happen?

I was not at home when the incident took place. The rain started on Sunday, June 28, around 3:30 pm and lasted for two hours. Of course, it was not the first time we had witnessed such a downpour, so everybody thought it was the usual rainfall.

Then it began to intensify, and the flood came. It was the flood that brought down the fence of the Christ Apostolic Church, Okeleye, Oshodi, Lagos. The water entered our compound with a lot of dirt. My daughter was sleeping inside the house with my wife, son and a baby.



Where were you when the rain started?

I had gone to work; I install tiles. I had gone out twice that day to check on my family but returned to my workshop. I was still there when the rain became very heavy, and I was called to come back home quickly. When I got home, the water in the compound was up to my chest. I was told everything happened suddenly.

Nobody expected it. Everybody was submerged in the water. A resident tried to rescue people by pulling them out through the roof of another small house to escape the flooding.

The flood was severe. A lot of property was destroyed because the water entered all the houses on the street. About four people would have died that day. There was a woman whom the water slammed against a wall and almost killed.

Has such flooding happened before in the compound?

No! There could be water in the compound, but it would later recede. If the fence of the church had not collapsed, the water would not have had access to our compound.

I think the fence was weakened by previous flooding, and the full force of the water caused it to collapse. It would be a welcome development if the government could help us by reducing the volume of water in the area. Lots of property has been destroyed because of the flooding.

I know of an individual who recently rented an apartment on the other street for N1.7m but has not been able to return to the house till now because of the flooding. All their property was destroyed.

So, your daughter drowned because she could not get help?

Yes, she drowned. She was still too small to struggle. Even her elder brother was already gasping before he was rescued. If they had stayed longer in the water, they would have died.

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Tell us about your late daughter.

I don't know what to say because this is something that is painful to me. She was my second-born and was six years old. Whenever I went to work and came back, she would always run up to welcome me. She was a very brilliant girl, and her teachers could attest to that.

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Despite being the second-born, she would sometimes teach her elder brother many things. If they gave both of them work, she would always be the first to finish. She was very smart, lovely and intelligent. I always prayed for them because I wanted them to be great together.

Two days before the incident, she came to me and said she wanted to be a singer. I told her that when I came back that night, she should sing for me. But I could not listen because my usual routine was that when I came back from work, I would take my bath and go to bed.

She never got the chance to sing before she died. Whenever they woke up in the morning, I always prayed for my children that it would be well with them. Before I left the house that day, they had gone for Asalatu (Islamic prayers), and I bade them farewell.

I had to delete all her pictures so I would stop crying. Whenever I see the pictures she took with her siblings, my heart aches. It was a sudden and painful death. She was not sick, and she was not missing, but she drowned.

How many rooms are in the house, and how many occupants are there?

There are four rooms, but there were also about four makeshift sections where some people lived.

What was the extent of the damage to your property?

Everything got spoilt. As I speak with you, all my property has been destroyed. I only have two sets of clothes with me now. I do not have a house to stay in anymore. I am presently staying with a friend.

The people selling puff-puff in the compound were also affected. About 45 bags of flour got spoilt, and everything was destroyed by the flood. All the property has been lost; even the gas we use for cooking can no longer be found.

Is the place convenient?

It is not convenient because it is like adding a burden to those people. Even though I am a dedicated Muslim, I cannot pray there because I do not want to disturb them.

What plan do you have to get another apartment?

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It is a difficult situation for me. There is no money. The minor jobs I get are only enough to cater for our feeding. I do not even know where to get the money to rent a house. I do not know where to start. That was why I told my wife to stay with one of her friends for now. I need help, no matter how small.