



THE METROSection

The Road ...and its blood thirst

• A notorious road in Oka, Ondo State, again claims 24 lives, 18 of them from a family returning from convocation of their son

PEOPLE of Iperi- Ikamu, Oka Akoko in Akoko South West Local Council of Ondo State, like others all over the world, agree on the inevitability of death.

Yet, when death came calling on Saturday, February 24, 2007, it was almost too much for the sleepy town as 24 people, out of a population of about 2,000, perished in one ghastly motor accident.

What ended so tragically had ironically started as a joyous family outing for the family of Chief Clement Dare Ogunrinde.

The family, well-known for their unity and closeness, had travelled to attend the graduation ceremony of one of Chief Ogunrinde's grandsons, Remi, at Adekunle Ajasin University (AAU), Akungba, Akoko, that fateful day.

They were on their way back home, having left the young graduate to continue to celebrate with his colleagues when at the notorious Oke-Oka/Iwaro Oka bend, the accident occurred.

The town was thrown into tears as 12 of their sons and daughters who lost their lives in the unfortunate incident included Chief Dare Ogunrinde himself, his two wives, with three children, three of his brothers and their three wives.

Since then, it has been unmitigated pain and deep sorrow for the people of the Iperi Ikamu community.

There is no family that the incident had affected directly.

According to a community leader in the town, Balogun Sehinde Arogbofa, 18 of the people that died were of his family, which included his uncle's wife, Mrs. Marian Ologun, and also a humble dynamic young lady, Mrs. Olotu.

He described the incident as very sad and "a tragedy, the type never heard of before in the history of the town."

"How are we going to bear all these losses when about 24 illustrious sons and daughters of this town, out of a population of about 2,000 have perished just like that, in one accident?"

"I was there at the scene of the accident when about two babies, each about six months old, were being thrown out from the wreckage of the vehicle. The whole town is devastated."

When *The Guardian* visited the town at the weekend, a week after the tragedy, people were still crying and weeping over the colossal loss the community has suffered.

Nobody was ready to talk with anyone. Everyone in the town, including the local ruler, were in confusion and palpable grief. Even the local chief of the town was not himself.

Three of his relations were also victims in the accident.

For a simple people, now feeling the pains of having to lose so many loved ones in one fell swoop, it is a terrible situation in the town.

They had given mass burial to some of the bodies that where badly mangled in the accident and could not be recognised.

In their frustration and bitterness, they directed their anger against government and rained curses on her.

"You see, we have written several letters to the state and Federal Governments to come to our aid by reducing the level of the road and widening it. But they turned deaf ears to our request. They want to kill all of us. Is it until we have all died that they will remember to do it?" one of the community leaders said.

Investigations by *The Guardian* revealed that the

scene of the accident at Oke-Oka/Iwaro Oka, a sharp bend on a high hill, has been notorious for accidents in the past.

Sometime in December last year, the community was thrown into mourning as no fewer than four persons lost their lives in an inferno caused by a tanker.

The vehicle lost control, crashed and caught fire.

The inferno led to the burning of several houses, shops, vehicles and property estimated at millions of naira.

The fire incident was not the first. About six years ago a similar accident-induced fire at the spot had claimed no fewer than 20 lives while several houses were burnt.



• The scene of the accident that claimed 24 lives at Oke- Oka/ Iwaro Road



• Another accident on the same spot that claimed 10 lives ...recently

From Julius Alabi, Akure

It was gathered that two tankers in that incident lost control while trying to negotiate the bend in the area.

However, the accident that claimed Chief Ogunrinde, so many of his family members as well as others, was said to have been caused by a truck registered: Kano XG 438 NSK.

The driver was said to have lost control while trying to negotiate the bend at Iwaro Oka and ran into the 18-seater bus that conveyed the victims.

The truck loaded with pepper and tomatoes was coming from Kano while the bus was returning to Iperi- Ikamu after the convocation ceremony at

Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, when the incident happened.

It took the intervention of the Divisional Police Officer in the area, Godwin Aigbe, to calm irate youths who barricaded the road and threatened to burn down any government vehicle sighted in the area.

Speaking on the incident, Basorun Sehinde Arogbofa, blamed government for the accident, saying that such occurrences would have been prevented if government had listened to the people by reducing the height of the road and also making Ayegunle/ Iwaro Oka road motorable so that the bend could be avoided by trucks.

"The road is a major route from the South-west



• Basorun Sehinde Arogbofa

to Abuja.

"If the road were to be dualised, there is nothing wrong with that. Let me tell you that until this road is given a face-lift, this type of accident would continue to happen. It is a matter of grave concern that no federal road is in good condition in Ondo State."

"What offence did the people of Ondo State commit to warrant this treatment?"

"Look at Ore-Sagamu Road, Akure-Ibadan Road, Owo/ Ikare-Oka Road and Owo-Ipele-Kabba Road, they are all bad. Enough of this neglect and the tragedy."

According to him, when President Olusegun

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