

One feared killed, other injured as churches, homes collapse in Benue

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Several churches, including homes, have collapsed in Mbayongo Ward, Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue State which shares boundary with southern Taraba.

A woman was killed and many injured to the disaster.

Properties and equipment estimated at millions of naira were destroyed.

Jonathan Agbidyeh, a House of Assembly member representing Katsina-Ala east Constituency where the tragedy occurred, said: "The death toll would have been more, if not for God's intervention."

The Assembly member visited the scenes of destruction on Thursday.

His visit brought relief to the affected persons, it was learnt.

Agbidyeh's Media and Publicity aide, Festus Aoraan, told The Nation that a torrential downpour, accompanied by strong winds, caused the buildings to collapse. Aoraan said the lawmaker described the incident as "tragic and sad."

"The residents were lamenting the incident during our visit to the place. The entire community wore a mournful face," Aoraan said.

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The churches destroyed are: St Mark's Catholic Church Bagu, NKST Church Tse-De, Living Faith Church Bagu and Healing Nation Church Bagu.

It was gathered that, apart from the churches, Bagu Community Nursery and Primary School and many residential buildings in the area were destroyed, displacing dozens of residents.

Comfort Msughshima Solomon and her co-worshipers were carrying out their routine religious activities at St Mark's Catholic Church when the walls and roof of the church suddenly pulled down. Comfort died in the rubble.

"One soul was lost, while some were lucky to be rescued. Those injured were rushed to the Local Government Health Clinic in Gbise, where they are being treated," Agbidyeh said in a statement yesterday.

Parts of his statement read: "On Tuesday evening, there was a tragic and sad incident at Tse-De, Gbishe, Mbayongo in Katsina-Ala which led to the collapse of many structures including churches, schools and personal homes. The affected area is in my Constituency.

"Yesterday, I and my team officially visited the destroyed areas. We sought briefs on the cause of the sad incident, and we were told the structures collapsed due to heavy winds.

"As a representative of the people, I am calling on the State Government, State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Caretaker Chairman of Katsina-Ala Local Government Council, other relevant authorities and individuals or groups to assist the affected community.

"It is sad and worrisome that this has happened at the time the entire world is locked down because of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, also known as Covid-19.

“My condolences are with the family of the deceased. My deep sympathy goes to all those who were either injured or lost properties to the disaster,” Agbidyeh said.