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We're only close to govt facilities, we're not connected to them –Residents of Ogun border towns

APRIL 11, 2015 : GBENRO ADEOYE 0 COMMENTS

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Ishashi road, Akute, Ogun State

| credits: Gbenro Adeoye

Sunday Chukwu was jubilant when he bought an Audi car a couple of years ago and he had every reason to be as it was his first car.

But less than two years later, the car was sold off for less than half the price it was bought. Chukwu, a generator spare parts trader, had happily traded off his first car for some peace of mind.

Akute

Living in Fashakin Estate, off Ishashi Road, Akute, a border community in Ifo Local Government Area of Ogun State has taught

Chukwu the hard truth. With his short experience as a car owner in Akute, Chukwu has come to realise that not every good thing is meant for everyone, especially people living in border communities in the state.

Ishashi Road, which leads to Chukwu's house, is infamously reputed as one of the worst roads in the area. By Chukwu's harsh account, it's the worst he has seen. He often jokes that the road is "so bad it single-handedly changed his status as a car owner to the opposite."

"After buying my car, I had no rest. The roads have been so bad that I had to sell my car when the cost of maintenance was too much for me to bear," Chukwu told our correspondent.

"If I changed shock absorber today, the next day, it would be the turn of one of the tyres. Then later, I would need to do some body works and it continued like that till I got tired and decided that enough was enough. I realised that I would be better off financially without the car."

In Chukwu's 18 years of living in Akute, the only sign of government presence he has felt came in the form of a flyover bridge being constructed at Akute junction by the state government. But even that has come with a few question marks.

For instance, work stopped on the bridge late 2014 and some residents in the area have been trying to figure out the cause of the delay.

Five flyover bridges in Sango, Agbado, Abule-Osho, Akute and Alagbole are being built as part of a road expansion from Sango through Oke-Aro and Akute to connect the Ogun State communities to Lagos at Berger.

DECISION 2015 **LIVE UPDATE**

Governorship & House of Assembly elections [Live Update]

APC wins in Jigawa:

The Governorship candidate of the APC in Jigawa State, Alhaji Badaru Abubakar, has been declared the winner of Saturday's governorship election in the state.

Returning Officer, Prof. James Ayatse, said the APC candidate polled 648,045, to defeat his closest opponent, Malam Aminu Ringim of PDP who had 479,447 votes.

April 13, 2015 - 7:30 am

Kayode, Adamawa:

The APC governorship candidate in Adamawa State, Senator Jibrilla Mohammed Bindow, has been declared winner of the 2015 governorship election in the state.

Bindow had 362,329 votes to defeat the governorship candidate of the SDP, Engr Markus Gundiri, his closest opponent, who polled 181,806 votes.

April 13, 2015 - 6:50 am

Anne, Cross Rivers:

Professor Ben Ayade was consequently declared winner of the Cross River State governorship election by Professor Comfort Ekpo, the state collating officer for the 2015 governorship election in the early hours of Monday.

April 13, 2015 - 6:24 am

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Residents blame the stoppage of the project work on the electioneering, which allegedly competes for the attention of political office holders during appropriation.

A tailor who works along Ajuwon Road, Akute, Mr. Taoreed Akinlota, painted a stark picture of the situation in the community.

Living in Akute, according to him, is like being in the middle of nowhere.

Taoreed, 35, said: "You won't find government impact here, so there is no good thing here. The bridge is the only government project I've seen here since I was born. It's like those of us living in communities around the border don't exist."

Akute is one of many border communities between Lagos and Ogun states which are in dire need of urgent attention. Like Akute, other communities including Lambe, Matogbun, Ajuwon, Ope-ilu, Agbado and Oke-Aro have been largely neglected by the various governments that have been in power, particularly in Ogun State within which the affected ones fall.

A large number of residents in these communities work in neighbouring Lagos State, which offers more economic opportunities, but some of them said they feel like the border communities are neither here nor there as they are left out of developmental projects.

During a visit to the communities, our correspondent observed that Akute-Ishasi Road was unpaved and bumpy. The previous night's rain had left pools of muddy water on the uneven road and pedestrians made frantic efforts to pull up their trousers and skirts to prevent them from touching the dirty water.

Oke-Aro

At Oke-Aro, the story is similar to that of Akute and the residents are eager to share it with anyone who cares to listen.

In the community, findings by *Saturday PUNCH* showed that many residents often leave their cars at home because of its bad roads to vote in favour of commercial motorcycles, popularly called *okada*.

A youth forum chairman in the community, Mr. Godwin Ojo, has grown weary of the situation. Although he regrets living in Oke-Aro, the cost of moving to a prime area in Lagos has also made the idea less appealing to him.

Ojo drives a Toyota Highlander, which he purposefully bought after seeing an advertisement which described the vehicle as being built for rugged terrains. But in spite of its maker's claims, Ojo changes his vehicle's shock absorbers every six months at the cost of about N25,000 each.

He said, "So I spend roughly N100,000 every six months and this is apart from other maintenance works I do on the vehicle. I also change brake pads more often than necessary and the general wear and tear of the vehicle should be considered.

"Normally, vehicle should last for up to four years before they start having faults but after two years here, I'm already thinking of saving for a new one. I regret staying in this area but it's a lot more expensive to stay in Lagos. But if one considers the cost of wear and tear and of getting to work late, it is wise to leave this area.

"The fact is that the community has been neglected; there is no development whatsoever. No good roads, infrastructure or public amenities. Nobody remembers us; the only time politicians remember us is during political campaigns."

Two months ago, a truck loaded with diesel fell and killed two persons along Oke-Aro/Matogbun Road after its driver failed to adequately manoeuvre the vehicle on the uneven slippery muddy road.

Ojo described the incident as one out of many similar fatalities being experienced in the area because of its bad roads.

"The incident was just one of so many such incidents here and it is very common during rainy season. We can't compare our communities with a border community like Ishaga, which happens to fall within Lagos. Sometimes, we wish Lagos State would take over Oke-Aro," he said.

In Oke-Aro, water is a scarce commodity and residents largely rely on buying potable water for cooking and other domestic purposes. Meanwhile, there is a short distance from Oke-Aro to Iju or Adiyin Waterworks, which serve Lagos State residents.

A resident of Oke-Aro, Mr. David Abayomi, said it has been tormenting for him to be living so close to the waterworks' facilities belonging to another state while he has been busy buying water for use.

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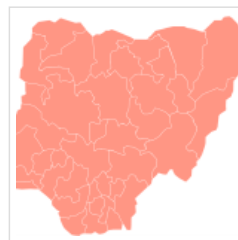
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"It's painful that we suffer to get water in this community while the Lagos State Water Corporation facilities are so close to us. But since we don't fall within Lagos State, there is nothing we can do. We are close to the facilities but we are not connected to them- what a shame," he said.

In the absence of the Oloke Aro of Aroland, Oba Ezekiel Soyinka, his Secretary, Mr. Ajani Sodipo, said the population of the town ran into "hundreds of thousands and keeps increasing daily."

He estimated that over 50 per cent of the residents of the area work in Lagos, adding that development takes time to get to border communities as they are often far from capital cities. He, however, argued that the situation in Ogun State should have been different because of its peculiar population distribution.

He said, "Development takes time to get to communities at the extreme ends of a state. In Ifo Local Government Constituency II, there are six wards. Four of them are considered as the major ones because they are highly populated and are the ones that determine who governs this state. The wards are Agbado; Oke-Aro/Iberagun; Akute-Ajuwon; and Isheri-Ojodu. Seventy-five per cent of the people in these wards work in Lagos."

Sodipo appealed to Ogun State government to do more for the border towns and communities within its boundary.

Matogbun

The traditional ruler of Matogbun, Chief Akin Osoteni, wished his community was located far away from the borders, believing that its fortune would have been better if that was so.

Reeling out a list of development projects he wanted to see in Matogbun, Osoteni said the community has been pleading with government to provide health centres, schools, police station, water supply and good roads in the area.

He said, "We have been asking for a police station for the community but when it was not forthcoming, the community has started building one. We hope that when completed, we would get policemen to come there.

"But our major challenge is getting a health centre; we tried to renovate an old community building to convert it to a health centre but there is no fund to complete it. The project has been abandoned by the community for three years because of limited resources. At the moment, it has no doors and windows.

"The problem we have is that there are too many projects competing for attention at the same time. We also need a secondary school but we have been able to complete one now- Matogbun Comprehensive High School. We also need potable water and better roads.

Lambe

Mrs. Falilat Lasisi has spent six years in Lambe and her assessment of it is totally critical.

When Lasisi moved into the community at the time, "the roads were terrible, there were no drainages, no water supply and power supply was bad." Six years on, Lasisi said everything has remained as they were.

She said, "Nobody cares about us here; I spend about N5,000 every two weeks on vehicle maintenance. Power supply in this area is very poor. We've not had power supply in two weeks now and even when we're supplied power, it's never for more than three hours a day.

"Rainy season is approaching and I'm already scared. It's a period I dread so much because there are no drainages in Lambe. Once it rains, the roads are flooded with muddy water. Sometimes, I just want to stay indoors because of the roads. During the rainy season, it becomes a problem to drive, walk or even ride on a motorbike on the roads. These days, I prefer riding *okada* to using my car."

Findings by *Saturday PUNCH* showed that electricity is shared among households, which the residents attributed to inadequate facilities in the area.

For instance, at an area in Lambe popularly called 'Inside,' a transformer at Purposeful Avenue is said to be serving 11 communities, each of which is made up of 30 to 40 houses.

One of the communities is Mercyland Estate, and its Community Development Association Chairman, Mr. Ayo Iyanda, said the area would need at least four additional transformers to take some load off the one currently being used.

Incidentally, Iyanda is also apprehensive about the approaching rainy season because of the effects of a canal passing through the area on the community annually. Every year, the canal from Matogbun, Ogun State which passes through Lucy Estate-Oremeta-Lambe Road, floods his community.



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"We spend nothing less than N1.8m to manage the situation buying loads of sand and so on but it will cost a lot more to solve the problem permanently; it's not something the community can afford at this time. So we hope the present government will come to our aid and do something about the flooding," he told our correspondent.

According to Iyanda, his community's motto has been, "Self help is the surest help," describing it as the only way available to residents.

He said, "We have not benefitted anything from the government in this area; everything we have in our community is a product of self-help. Not too long ago, we spent over N1m to replace our wooden electricity poles to concrete ones and we changed the aluminium conductors. We buy electricity cables, fill our roads and do everything from our pockets to run the community. We can't sit down and wait for government forever."

Ogun State Commissioner for Information, Mr. Yusuph Olaniyonu, asked our correspondent to call him back when he was contacted on the telephone but he failed to answer subsequent calls by our correspondent.

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