

# Panic as gully ‘swallows’ 50 houses in Ogun community

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The gully

- Eight landlords reportedly died from shock
- We are helpless – Ogun govt

**Samson Folarin**

Owakurudu community in the Ijebu Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State is becoming deserted due to a gully that is eating into the community.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that no fewer than 50 houses had fallen into the gully reportedly created by an abandoned water channelisation project of the state government.

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About eight landlords, who owned houses in the area, reportedly died from shock after their houses fell into the gully.

When our correspondent visited the community on Tuesday, he observed as some tenants packed their belongings, preparing to vacate another house under threat of falling a prey to the gully.

Our correspondent noted that parts of a few houses had fallen into the gully, while their owners rehabilitated the remaining part to make them habitable.

Some landlords, who spoke to our correspondent, said the state government was responsible for their predicament.

One of them, Alhaji Tunde Agbonmabiwon, who took *PUNCH Metro* round to see the damage to his bungalow, said he had been living in the area for about 27 years.

He said, “I have been living in my house since 1991. There was no problem then. I have all my documents intact, including the certificate of occupancy, survey and building plan.

“When I moved in, the pit was just about two feet wide. But the government, during a road rehabilitation, decided to channel all the water of Ijebu Ode through our community.

“Whenever it rains, we become afraid because the water pours in torrents. For about two to three hours after it must have stopped raining, floodwater will still be pouring through here.”

A 74-year-old landlord, Adesanwo Maseka, whose tenants had vacated his building, said he was losing hope.

Maseka noted that promises made by government officials had gone unfulfilled.

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He said, “We called the attention of the Federal Government to it in 2008; a minister and the Awujale of Ijebuland, accompanied by other traditional rulers and chiefs, came for an on-the-spot assessment. We went to the house of former Governor Gbenga Daniel when he was still in charge of Ogun State and he asked us to weed the bushes and consider the job done. We called all kinds of people and government agencies, including the Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority and their officials, came to survey and have meetings with us. Nothing came out.

“What we are suffering is no fault of ours. The state government diverted water into our community. When I came here in 1985, I used to cross through this space to other streets. But now, see what has happened.

“All the houses on this line that have caved in, their landlords died from this problem. There are eight of them, including Odunaya, Eshin Funfun, Badejo, Baba Nepa, Baba Nubi and Ogunjirin. Look at what has happened to me as well, is this not enough to kill me? I am 74 years old. What other work can I do with my life? All the things I gathered in my lifetime are falling apart before my eyes.”

Another resident and community leader, Tola Ogunbanjo, said although the erosion damage extended to Imoru Road, the community was the worst hit.

“About 50 houses have fallen into the gully. A large poultry farm owned by a retired principal of the Ijebu Ode Grammar School, Mr Oluwole Kujore, had also gone into it,” he added.

The chairman of the landlords, Adegbesan Adeshina, said the state government should take responsibility for what had befallen the residents and remedy it.

He said, “I bought my land in 1984 and I packed into my house in 1987. As of then, there was no gutter, except that rainwater passed here until the government diverted the water to our area. The water came in through Logun Filling Station, where the government stopped and abandoned their channelisation project. We are victims of the haphazard job of the ministries of works and the environment. This is pure government negligence. And we have written to both federal and state governments since 2002 without any result.

“In 2016 when Governor Ibukunle Amosun held a budget briefing, I told him to help us and that six landlords had died as of then due to the problem. He said he had seen some officials at Abuja and they were coming to address it. Nothing has been done till today. I lost N3.5m fish investment here last year, including a pond worth over N2m.”

Our correspondent obtained copies of letters sent to the state Governor, Amosun; the Director-General, National Emergency Management Agency; the Managing Director, Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority; the Permanent Secretary, Ogun State Ministry of the Environment.

The letter addressed to Amosun and dated July 24, 2018, was written by a group, Justice Development and Peace Commission, Catholic Diocese of Ijebu Ode, on behalf of the community.

The group, in the letter signed by its Deputy Director, Disu Irete, said after it visited Owakurudu in January 2015, it wrote the state ministry of environment and called its attention to the plight of the residents.

It said that in October 2015, a team from the ministry visited and promised to provide a “lasting solution to the sufferings of the community,” adding that nothing was done.

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“On behalf of the community, we, however, request the following measures/interventions to mitigate the sufferings of the people:

“Provision of a drainage for Owakurudu erosion and such other professional intervention that would provide a lasting solution to the sufferings of the people; dredging of Owa River and provision of a drainage on the left and right sides,” the letter read in part.

The Ogun State Commissioner for the Environment, Bolaji Oyeleye, said the matter had been taken to the federal level, adding that it was beyond the state government.

He said, “We have approached the Ecological Funds Office in that regard and we have also reached out to the Federal Ministry of the Environment to come to the assistance of the state. It is a project that we at the state level cannot face head-on; we need some form of intervention at the federal level. Even the last time we had a council on the environment last year, the council visited the site and took note of what was there. The council took it up to reach out on behalf of the state to the federal government.”

Oyeleye said the state had yet to get anything from the federal government.

The Minister for Works, Power and Housing, Mr. Raji Fashola, did not pick his calls and had yet to respond to a text message from our correspondent as of press time.

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