

# Six killed as flood submerges Lagos communities

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• Some of the submerged communities Photos: Deji Lambo

## Deji Lambo

The recent release of water from the Oyan Dam in Abeokuta has plunged residents of some communities in Lagos into untold hardship as their houses, shops and places of worship have been submerged.

Residents of the God First, Ajegunle and Itowolo communities in the Ikosi-Isheri and Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Areas of Lagos State, alleged that some persons had drowned in the flood water.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered during a tour of the affected areas on Monday that the victims were a man identified simply as Baba Ibeji; one Baba Michael; a yet-to-be-identified Egun man; a woman who was bitten by a snake; and a mother and her baby, whose names could not be immediately ascertained.

It was learnt that the mother and her baby had visited the God First community to see someone around Maidan-Orile, when the canoe conveying them capsized.

A helmsman in the area, Chekwube Nuanya, told our correspondent that the woman and her baby drowned, adding that their bodies were recovered three days after the boat had capsized.

The Anambra State indigene said, “Some days ago, a woman, who wanted to see someone at Maidan-Orile, boarded a canoe, but when the helmsman got to a place, he started losing control because the paddle could not hold firm.

“So, the canoe was swaying on the water with the woman and her baby on board. The helmsman told the woman to use a bowl to scoop water out of the canoe, because water had already entered it. It was while doing that that the canoe capsized and they all fell into the water. The helmsman survived, while the bodies of the woman and her baby were seen floating on the water three days after.”

At the Unity Estate, Owode-Onirin, *PUNCH Metro* gathered that another yet-to-be-identified woman was attempting to board a floater when she was bitten by a snake and died from its venom.

A resident, who identified herself simply as Mrs Agbaje, said “The snake crawled into the floater and bit the woman. People were shouting that the part of the body, where she was bitten, should be tied to prevent the venom from spreading, but it was too late.

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“Although she managed to get to her house, her leg started swelling and foamy substances were coming out from her mouth until she passed away.”

Another resident, Adewole Afolabi, while lamenting the state of the affected communities, explained that a lot of residents were moving out of the areas and urged the government to construct drainage channels in the affected areas.

He said, “Many communities are affected by the release of water from the dam; our situation is pathetic; most people have moved out because the water entered their houses. I have relocated my family to another place and the remaining persons staying in the community are some landlords, who have nowhere else to go. Businesses have been paralysed and schools have been shut down.

“What heightened the suffering is that there are no drainage channels in the areas; we are appealing to the government to construct drainage channels to take water out of the communities. We park our vehicles outside the estate and pay helmsmen between N200 and N500 to convey us to our various houses using canoes and floaters.”

Another resident, Harrison Amadasun, said, “Debris and water hyacinth around the Itowolo Bridge have affected the flow of water out of the communities. We want the state government to help us clear the weeds and debris so that the water released from the dam can easily flow out.

“The Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority usually releases water from the dam every three years, but this year’s water is too much and a lot of properties have been affected.”

Residents noted that three people drowned on Monday after the canoes conveying nine members of the communities capsized when they ran into the debris and hyacinth at the Kio-Kio community between Itowolo and Ajegunle.

“Baba Ibeji, Baba Michael and an Egun man drowned at midnight during an operation; they were nine that went for the operation but on their way back, their canoes capsized and six people survived, while the remaining three drowned. It was those who escaped that came back to narrate the incident, but the bodies of those, who drowned, have not been found,” a trader, Precious Okolie, said.

When contacted, the Director of Service, the Ogun-Osun River Basin Authority, Femi Dokunmu, confirmed that water was released from the Oyan Dam after it was filled up due to the heavy downpour.

He, however, noted that the agency had been exploring preventive measures to address the situation.

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Dokunmu said, “The agency has been taking measures to ensure that we do not have any flood. The primary purpose of the dam is to control flood by storing water to prevent flooding downstream. If the volume of water that comes in through rainfall does not go downstream, it will reduce the chances of the river overflowing its banks.

“We have a proactive measure of systematically releasing the water during the dry season before the rain starts, which has helped us in years when there was no heavy rainfall; that is why last year and the year before, the people living in the affected areas did not experience this kind of flooding due to our preventive measures.

“Now that we have heavy rainfall, it is increasing the level of water in our reservoir and the river can no longer accommodate such volume of water due to the rainfall; so, we have to allow the water to go downstream by opening the gates of the dam to release the water that has inundated our reservoir.

“It is not that the agency is producing water; it is the rainfall and we cannot but release such water to go downstream.”