

Deaths, losses, tears as floods Gombe, others



•Kogi

Tunde Oyekola, Chima Azubuike and Emmanuel Obianiri

Many states have been submerged by floods with some residents in Kogi, Anambra, Bauchi, Gombe among others in the affected areas currently facing a tough time. The incidents have recorded human and material losses with several sacked from their homes.

Kogi reels under floods

In Kogi, flooding pounded the state so hard that several houses had been submerged, belongings destroyed and lives lost. About six persons, including a toddler, were killed by the flood that sacked communities in the Ihaji Local Government Area of the state. Over 600 hectares of rice farmland among several buildings were flooded due to the flood caused by the opening of the Lagdo dam and torrential rainfall.

The woes of residents affected by the flood wrecking different parts of the state have worsened with the scarcity of potable water which the state Ministry of Water Resources said was caused by the flood.

Meanwhile, the state's governor, Yahaya Bello, had called on the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd) to declare Kogi a state of national disaster, following the ravaging effect of flood in the state and environs. He added that the natural disaster had affected the nine local government areas of the state which were along River Niger and River Benue.

Two dead bodies were said to be brought out of the flood by divers after a boat capsized on Tuesday when it was ferrying displaced residents to Ganaja from Gadumo, Lokoja, Kogi State.

A businesswoman and a displaced person at the Saint Luke Primary School, Adankolo, Lokoja, Oyoze Muhammed, said that she was in pain as everything had been lost to the floods.

She said, "At the moment, I have lost over a million naira in goods and property that I honestly cannot account for. I just bought gravel for the construction of another building and by now, I believe everything has gone for good."

"It is sad that right before one's eyes, everything one has ever owned is being damaged. If I were to be dead, it would be a different case but living while all that I have worked for goes down the drain is saddening. Imagine, one of my neighbours lost her son to the flood. I have neither seen nor heard from her since."

Early warnings

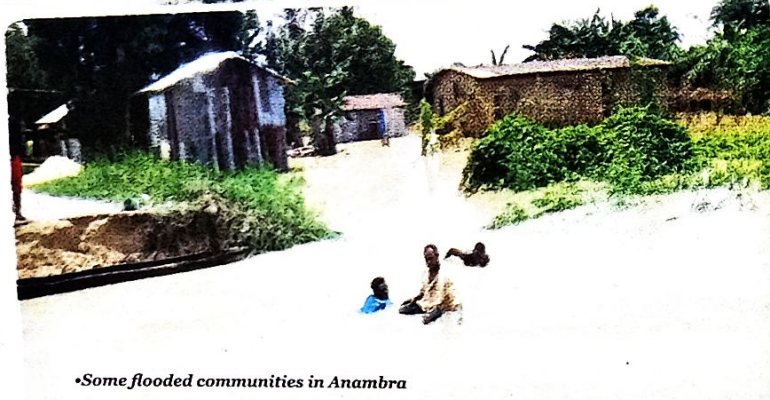
In August, the Nigerian Meteorological Agency predicted that the prevailing weather pattern in Nigeria would cause above-normal rainfall in about 19 states between August and October this year.

It stated that above-normal rainfall conditions were expected over the northern states such as Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Bauchi, much of Kebbi and Gombe, as well as northern Kaduna and Adamawa states, whereas normal to above-normal rainfall conditions were expected over most parts of the south-western states including Lagos, Ogun, Osun, much of Oyo, Ondo, parts of Ekiti, and Edo, advising state and National Emergency Management Agencies to intensify adaptation, mitigation, and response mechanisms to curb the impending danger.

Consequently, in August, the President said that the destructive floods recorded in about 22 states and the Federal Capital Territory had affected 508,721 people since January 2022, displaced 73,379 people, with 115 casualties, and

injured 277 people. Also, the floods and heavy rain left about 37,633 houses destroyed or severely damaged.

The President reiterated that the tragic events had intensified the need for states and local governments to step up their level of preparedness in handling emergencies.



•Some flooded communities in Anambra

Kwara flooding

In Ilorin, Kwara State, rain fell from Thursday night and lasted till Friday, causing intense hardship to the people of the ancient town. After the rain subsided, about six lives were lost while several property which included private buildings, bridges and culverts and fish farms were affected.

Among those who died in the ensuing flood were Sheikh Abdulganis Al-Adabbi Aboto, a popular Islamic cleric who was returning to Ilorin from Minna, Niger State, alongside his two aides in a car which plunged into the Olusola Saraki Abattoir Bridge along Sobi Army Barracks road, Ilorin. Also, a woman simply identified as Iya Ibadan died after a wall fell at Arjo compound, Pakata area in Ilorin.

Some youths also reportedly drowned in Asa River at Amilenge area, Ilorin, while attempting to catch fish that escaped from fish farms swept away by the flood.

Some of the areas affected included Asa Dam, Odota, Surulere, Baboko, Isale-Koko, Airport area, Warrah Oja, Sawmill, Kuntu, Oloje, Sango, Isale Aluko, Offa Garage/Ohlande and other areas were seriously affected by the downpour.

The Kwara State Fire Service said that it recovered two corpses and a Toyota Yaris car marked APP544E from a river opposite Olusola Saraki Abattoir along Sobi Army Barracks road, Ilorin.

Also, the service noted that the car fell into the river while the driver was struggling to navigate through the flood, adding that it suddenly got stuck while the flood pushed the car and its occupants into the river.

The state environmental Protection Agency said that two of the youth who were fishing drowned in the Asa River.

Landlord of the 10-room apartment at Arjo compound, Pakata area, Ilorin which killed a woman identified as Iya Ibadan, Alhaji Saliman Arjo, said that the woman was killed by a wall which fell on her.

He said that the wall of the building was weakened by the flood due to poor drainage in the area, adding that the flood was aggravated by drainage recently constructed on Pakata/Adeta road.

He said, "The woman who died in the house is one of my tenants. She has lived in this house for more than seven years and sold provision in front of the house. The rain began at about 9pm and everybody went to sleep. But at about 2am, I woke up and discovered that the water had occupied all the rooms. I woke all the other people in the compound. Iya Ibadan came out with a little child and we all gathered at the balcony, but we didn't know that she had gone to the side of the building

where the wall fell on her.

"We didn't know that she was trapped under the rubble of the wall until we started looking for her. It was one of the boys that saw her leg under the fallen wall in the morning and that was when we discovered that the wall had killed her."

He described the late woman as an easy going person, adding that he had never seen her quarrel or fight with anyone since she moved to the area.

Victims at Agbooba and Asa dam areas where flood destroyed buildings, a community bridge and other valuables recounted their ordeals during the downpour.

One of them, Emmanuel Oye, who said that his house was submerged by the flood, said that he and his wife woke up in the midnight to salvage some household materials submerged by the flood.

Oye said, "Every room in our apartment was submerged. We woke up in the midnight to pack some materials and put them in the ceiling of our house so that water will not damage them."

Similarly, goods estimated at over N50m were destroyed in Ojatanun market, Baboko, after flooding submerged over 100 shops.

One of the affected sellers, Mr Tunde Adeoye, who lamented over the flooding which he described as perennial in the market attributed it to inadequate drainage on a road passing through the market.

Some of the market women, who threatened to stop paying tax to the state government, lamented that many customers had stopped coming to the market due lack of good roads in and outside the market.

In Kulende-harmony Estate, the bridge linking the area to Akerebiata is on the verge of collapse as a part of it caved in after the downpour.

The flood, according to residents, washed off the supporting cast underneath the bridge and left the bridge on the verge of collapse.

A resident in the estate, Kabiru Alao, said that they had cordoned off the bridge to prevent vehicles and motorcycle from passing over it to prevent any disaster.

Residents told Saturday PUNCH that they took the step to avoid loss of life from the imminent collapse of the bridge, urging the government to quickly take actions by blocking off the road.

The state governor, Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, visited Arjo compound in Pakata area, Ilorin to commiserate with the people over the death of Iya Ibadan.

The governor also visited Isale Koko and Kulende Harmony Bridge to condole with those whose property were damaged by the flood, reassuring them of government efforts of infrastructural renewal in the state.

Earlier, Commissioner for Environment, Mrs Remilekun Banigbe and her counterpart in the works and transport ministry, Rotimi Iliassu, paid a visit to the affected area and sympathised with the residents of Ilorin whose houses were flooded after the downpour.

The two commissioners

in a statement jointly signed by them said, "Different teams of experts and administrators from the ministries of environment and works and transport have visited the various areas that were flooded. Apart from the obvious increase in rainfalls nationwide owing to climate change, incessant dumping of waste in our drainage remains a major reason for the flooding, as refuse continues to block free flow of water."

Also, the state House of Assembly urged the state governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, to direct the Ministry of Works and Transport to set machinery in motion for the expansion of the Abattoir Bridge which claimed the lives of the cleric and his aides.

The assembly made the recommendation after passing a motion on the Need to Expand the Ilorin Abattoir Bridge and provide steel barricades on both sides of the bridges that lack the facility.

Floods pound Anambra

Over 60 per cent of lands in Anambra State are currently underwater, according to the State Emergency Management Authority. The development forced the state government to order closure of schools in the areas where over 700,000 people were displaced and 300 communities sacked.

Apart from submerging houses and farmlands, critical infrastructure such as schools, healthcare centres, police stations, banks, offices were also affected; a situation that made the state government to shut schools in the riverine areas.

The flooding experienced in the country is intense, making the spokesperson for the National Emergency Management Agency, Manzo Ezekiel, to say, "This is the highest we have ever had since 2012."

Records from the State Emergency Management Agency indicated that Anambra, unlike other states in the same situation, has a peculiar case as over 60 per cent of its 4,885 sq km land mass are currently submerged. The agency also lamented that the figure would rise to a million in a few days time as more victims were joining the Internally Displaced Camps daily.

According to SEMA, statistics on the displaced persons in the affected communities in the state indicate thus: Ogburn 286,000, Anambra West 237,000, Anambra East 103,000, Awka North 10,345, Anyamehum has 9,240 flood cases and 5,468 displaced persons. The victims are camped with various internally displaced persons across the state.

The state governor, Prof Chukwuma Soludo, during

overrun Kogi, Anambra,

his visit to one of the IDP camps in Onitsha North Local Government Area, sought the support of government at all levels, agencies and individuals to tackle menace.

The governor also noted that the flood water surged from Cameroon, urging the Federal Government to hold dialogue with the government of Cameroon in order to proffer solutions to the issue.

He said, "Anambra State Government is doing everything possible to alleviate the sufferings of the people. They need support now and afterwards because their houses, property and farmlands are submerged. I am worried that they will have to start life afresh. We are receiving people from Delta State to join the IDP camp in Onitsha North."

The National Emergency Management Agency has confirmed one person dead and many injured. Though the agency's state acting coordinator, Mr. Thickman Taninmu, confirmed the death of one Ginkamwa Izobba in the Enugu-Oni, Aguleri flood, he disclosed that Izobba died when his house collapsed due to the impact of the flood.

He added that NEMA officials accompanied with those of SEMA visited Umueze-Anam, Mkpunando, Umunteze, Igbedo, Inoma Ifite-Ogwari in Anambra East and Anayamelum LGAs to observe impact of the floods on houses, farmlands, schools, health centres, police stations, churches and other critical infrastructure.

Another death was also recorded of a 70-year-old man identified as Mr Sunday Mesiobi, in Ogbu-Akroma, Afani constituency of Ogburu Local Government Area. His corpse was found in his room submerged by water.

The deceased was said to be the only one left in the house after he had evacuated his wife and children. It was, however, not clear when the incident happened, but family sources said his corpse was found when one of them came to check on him after repeated calls to his telephone line went for days without any response.

"They sighted his clothes floating on the water inside his room and when the clothes were pulled up it turned out that his body was under the water," the source said.

Talking about the challenges in managing the situation to our correspondent, an official of SEMA, Mr Chukwudi Onyefiofor, listed financial constraints, inadequate data and raw materials and negative attitude of the displaced persons as some of the issues faced by the agency.

Onyefiofor said, "As of the last count, about 700,000 persons have been displaced and the figure will shoot to a million in a few days' time. Why Anambra State is different is that the state landmass is 4,885sq km and the six LGAs that are currently being submerged by the flooding have more than 60 per cent of the land mass. Presently, we have 60 per cent of Anambra State landmass submerged. That is why Anambra's nature is peculiar.

"Currently, 60 per cent of the landmass in the state is largely agro-based, where a large chunk of farming activities take place. What this means is that over 60 per cent of farmlands in the state are currently submerged and this indicates that we should expect massive food shortage if no intervention is put in place. In other states experiencing flooding, they still have a large chunk of upper ground where they can convert for agricultural activities and accommodation unlike Anambra.

"If over 60 per cent agro areas in the state are under water, the other 40 per cent in the urban area, one cannot grow any food there. Imagine the hunger that will visit the people and the devastating effect of the agro-business. The Federal Government and relevant international agencies should come up with intervention funds in a massive way. It's not something agencies or state governments can handle. Sometime in 2018, the Federal Government tried doing it by setting up a presidential committee on agro-relief for those affected by flood. In Anambra, we submitted 40,000 farmers affected by flooding, but the intervention covered only 4,650 farmers. But this time round, intervention should be massive because the flood experience this year has affected over 60,000 farmers and we expect their interventions to cover this number of farmers."

Also speaking with *Saturday PUNCH*, President General, Ogwuikpele community of Ogburu LGA, Mr Madupio Victor, lamented that the perennial disaster was worsened this year by persistent rainfall and the River Niger which had overflowed its banks.

Ogwuikpele community, one of the worst hit communities, is an agro-based area largely dominated by farmers. Victor noted that food shortage and looming health disasters heightened the people's fears, lamenting that apart from affected farmlands and other critical infrastructure, water had been contaminated and animals killed by the flood.

"As it stands now, a lot of homes in our community have been lost and several families relocated and the number is over 1,000 based on the ones we can easily remember. We need medical attention and we also need relief materials because the children and nursing mothers are now vulnerable to all kinds of diseases. There are also dead bodies of both human beings and animals under the water and one can imagine the disease and danger this is posing," he added.

Also, President General, Akiri-Ogidi community, Michael Chukwue, who is also the head of farmers group, called on both the federal and state governments to come to their aid, lamenting that the NEMA and SEMA cannot shoulder the responsibility alone.

However, the state Commissioner for Environment, Mr Felix Oluwegwu, said the state government had commenced the inspection and understudy of the affected communities, describing flooding as an act of nature and a natural disaster.

He said, "Flooding is an act of nature and it is a natural disaster but we started early to carry out awareness campaigns before the flood and we are currently interfacing with the NEMA and SEMA to assist flood victims. Medical teams have been deployed to the affected communities to assist the victims."

In his comment, the state Commissioner for Information, Paul Nwosu, stated that the state government had constituted a task force comprising the deputy governor, commissioners for local government, health, power and water resources to immediately engage the displaced people and ensure the provision of essential items and services.

Gombe groans under floods

About three weeks ago, dwellers of Pamadu, Majidadi, Kwara, Tambau, Gwalameche communities in Gombe State went to bed with the hope of sleeping soundly. They were however roused from sleep by floods which ravaged houses and displaced hundreds.

Saturday PUNCH noted that the flood emanated from Banguji, border between Kaltungo and Bambam, spreading to Digga, border between Lalapido and Pero-Chonge. Though no life was lost, property worth millions ended in ruins.

A resident of Majidadi Gwandum, Soli Adamu, said he was able to rescue his aged father by carrying him on his back, adding that he had to do that since his father had been crippled for some time.

The worried Adamu said they were asleep when their home was overtaken by the raging flood.

He said, "From my estimate in Majidadi alone, 200 farms and over 100 houses were affected. We had to save ourselves by carrying our loved ones out of the village. We made calls to our traditional and political leaders who promised to come to our aid."

Adamu urged government agencies to hurry up in facilitating relevant support for victims, stressing that many of the victims were battling hunger following the destruction of farmlands and barns soaked with water.

"We are calling on the government to help us relocate from the community and resettle us in another place, because now we have to build makeshift tents to stay in," he said.

Thirty-year-old mother of four, Blessing Babadi is a farmer with her husband currently in Kano State to make ends meet. Babadi said life had been tough managing with her four children without her husband living with them.

She said, "I'm a guinea corn farmer, the rain started at midnight. As a mother that does both the job of a man and a woman, I realised that the building may collapse, so I picked my children and left the house in search of safety."

Speaking with one of our correspondents, Babadi, who was sighted at a neighbour's house, narrated how life had treated her, noting that she now depended on her neighbour for food and shelter.

She added, "I have been staying with a neighbour who accommodated me the night the rain started. It was later that day that I came to carry the house zinc so that I don't lose it to criminals. I was not mind if the government will rebuild our houses to alleviate our plight. It has not been easy depending on another family for survival."

"My husband has been in Kano State since five years ago and I am the only one with the kids struggling to fend for them."

Forty-year-old apprentice tailor, Doris Isah, residing in Tambau, said that she combined tailoring with farming to fend for her family.

She said, "I was sleeping at night when I heard a loud sound around zam. I noticed that a portion of my building had fallen with multiple cracks on the wall. We tried to manage the rest of the building so that we can have a place to sleep."

Isah explained that dwelling in the available space had become terrible for her, noting that she covered the fallen part with mosquito nets and sticks to support the cracked building.

She stated, "We are exposed to cold and sun because the place is open. Many times when I leave the house, my mind is not usually at rest because the whole house is open and anybody can enter it. The building is also exposed to reptiles that can easily attack my children and me."

Isah, who is a mother of four, said that she discussed the challenges with her husband, adding that there was no help yet.

She said, "For the past three years, my husband has not been with us. He travelled to Abuja to get more opportunities.

He comes home only during festivities. I appeal to the government to help us by providing dwelling for my children and me."

On his part, a resident of Gubba, Daniel Danladi, said that he never envisaged he could be a victim of flooding.

The 34-year-old said his crops were badly affected, stressing that recovering might require external support to survive the loss.

Danladi said, "We were sleeping around 2am and it started raining heavily. I never thought my house would be affected. We ran out of the house to discover that my barn was flooded together with the millet and rice grains that I just harvested. We spent the night trying to salvage what we can from the ruins." He noted that his farm was also submerged by the flood.

Danladi stated, "I was also told that my farm was flooded but I have yet to go there because there's no access road to the farms. I call on Governor Inuwa Yahaya to please come to our aid. We have yet to get any assistance from the government. We are at the mercy of our families and friends until we can rebuild our homes."

Commenting on the issue, the District Head of Gwandum under Kaltungo chieftdom, Yahaya Haruna-Ayuba, decried the devastation caused by the flood.

He stated that he had not witnessed such a level of destruction since he assumed the position, calling on the relevant authorities to help his people.

Haruna-Ayuba said, "The level of damage is intense; many people in the community lost their crops, homes and means of livelihood. I have never witnessed this in recent years. I can't quantify the extent of the loss."

He further lamented what he described as the failure of the state emergency management agency to bring relief materials to the people.

The district head noted, "We are appealing to the government and other non-governmental organisations to come to our aid. As of now, we have yet to receive assistance from any NGO, state government or NEMA. My people are earnestly waiting for assistance and we are praying that it will come."

He also blamed the flooding on environmental and human factors, stating that human activities caused deforestation and lack of drainages which he said was beyond the dwellers.

Assessing the property loss, a lawmaker representing Pero-Chonge constituency in the Shomgom Local Government Area at the state House of Assembly, Samuel Wina, described the



Danladi and his destroyed hut

to have suffered losses from the devastation.

He said, "The flood has caused extensive damage with more than 100 of them being farmers. The Local Government has appropriately reported to the agency. Some of the farmlands were washed, some submerged and over

68 households affected. Individually, the number could be higher than that and the sections of the roads affected included the Filiya roads. The volume of water that came to the bridge could not take the water, thereby affecting a section of the bridge linking the headquarters."

On why the communities had yet to get relief materials, he said it was unfortunate that there were no relief materials at the time the report of the flooding got to the agency.

He added, "If we had relief items, we would have immediately swung into action by delivering relief materials to the survivors of the unfortunate disaster. As it is the tradition, due to the numbers involved, it is beyond the local council and it has done the right thing by reporting to us. It is unfortunate that the one we have is exhausted and we have to seek another tranche from the government for us to be able to deliver to the survivors."

Commenting on the cause of the disaster, Garba said that it was part of the challenges of climate change, stressing that it was surmountable.

He stated, "It is one of the effects of climate change that we are witnessing in the world. If you visit the area and there is no river there, we can't say it is the river that has overflowed its bank. That is why the state government is seriously trying to mitigate the problem by introducing the Gombe Goes Green initiative which is about planting tree to ensure that the adverse effects of the climatic change is reduced."

In July, hundreds of dwellers were sacked from their area by flood which occurred in Bajoga in the Fumakaye Local Government Area of the state.

Yobe, Bauchi, others not left out

In a related development, the Yobe State Emergency Management Agency stated that as of October 2, over 31,000 households had been affected by floods in 255 communities across the 17 LGAs in the state, adding that 75 fatalities had been reported with many more lives at risk across 10 council areas from May to date. In July, 100 persons were displaced and four deaths were recorded in the state as a direct consequence of windstorms and floods.

Also in Bauchi in September, three persons were confirmed dead by the flood which damaged 1,453 houses and several farmlands in Zaki and Gamauwa LGAs of the state.

In Edo State, residents of nearly 12 communities mostly in Etsako Central Local Government Area, Edo North Senatorial district fled their houses due to submersion by flood as a result of torrential rain in the last few days.

Also in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, many residents were reported to have been displaced by flood after heavy rainfall while in July, 30 shops were destroyed. In August, Jigawa State recorded 50 fatalities.

Recently, in Lagos State, a building in Maryland sank due to heavy rainfall which left some parts of the area flooded. The prompt call and activities of emergency responders led to the rescue of nine ladies trapped in the building. Similarly, two persons lost their lives during the flood that submerged various communities in the Alimosho Local Government Area of the state among several other devastating flood cases in the state.

On October 5, the Lagos State Government alerted residents of the state, especially those residing on the banks of Ogun River, to prepare to protect themselves against the intense flooding to be caused by heavy rainfall and the release of water from Oyan Dam, adding that October was the peak period that might cause flooding in the identified areas.

Additional reports by Blessing Afolabi and Fatteh Hamid



destruction as

a catastrophe.

Wina said, "It's a big disaster that has covered the entire constituency. Farms have been over flooded and houses felt most especially mud houses because we live in remote areas where people depend on mud to build. Livelihoods have been put in jeopardy, with people perching with relations or in school environments. It's pathetic and we sympathise with our people."

"This is what global warming is bringing about and all we can do is call on the relevant agencies and ministries to come to the aid of the Pero-Chonge constituency. Many of them have lost everything. We should adjust to the realities of nature and reduce activities that will bring global warming such as tree cutting, bush burning and drainage blocking."

Speaking in an interview with *Saturday PUNCH*, Relief and Rehabilitation Officer, Gombe State Emergency Management Agency, Mohammed Garba, decried the effects of the flood.

Garba noted that about 100 farms had been identified