

Oyan dam flood: Capsized boat ends UNILORIN student, friend's dreams

1st November 2023

| By Dayo Oyewo

DAYO OYEWO writes on how the flooding in the Olorunsogo community of Ikorodu, Lagos State, led to the death of two teenagers, Misturat Okunbanjo and Azeezat Amoo

The Olorunsogo community in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State was thrown into mourning on Thursday last week following the death of two teenagers in a boat accident.

Raised in a fairly populated community of about 100 households, Misturat Okunbanjo (18) and Azeezat Amoo (16) had enrolled in a catering school at Isawo, on the outskirts of the community.

After their lectures at the catering school on Thursday evening, they headed for the boat that would convey them across the flooded section of the route leading to their community.

Three additional passengers joined them before the paddlers embarked on the journey to the opposite side of the road.

They had barely got halfway into their journey when the canoe hit a culvert that was covered by the flood and capsized in the process. As the boat got filled with water and was about to sink, they all jumped into the water.

While the three other adult passengers attempted to swim against the tide and were eventually rescued, the two youngsters were carried away by the flood.

The state's Fire and Rescue Services, while confirming the incident on Friday, said the corpses of the deceased teenagers were found on Friday morning.

A statement by the agency's Deputy Director of Public Affairs, Ololade Agboola, said a search and rescue operation was conducted by men of the fire service with the assistance of locals, which led to the recovery of the bodies.

The deaths of Mitsturat and Azeezat were the first casualties recorded since the flood crisis caused by the water released from the Oyan River Dam started.

The flood, which was caused by the unscheduled release of excessive water from the Oyan River Dam, had in the past few weeks wreaked havoc in the border communities of Lagos and Ogun states, thereby displacing the residents and destroying people's properties.

While the victims were still counting their losses, it was, however, a sad tale of grief and agony for the parents of the two teenagers, who lamented the loss of their loved ones in the tragic incident.

It was gathered that the late Misturat had just secured admission to the University of Ilorin and was preparing to resume on Monday before she met her untimely death.

Azeezat, on the other hand, had just obtained her West African Examination Council form and was preparing for the exams.

Speaking on his last encounter with the late Azeezat, her father, Ahmed Amoo, said they were supposed to return home together, but she said she would come home with Misturat.

He said, “We both left the house every morning. Whenever I was coming home, we also came home together. But on that fateful day, she said I should not bother to wait for her and that she would come with Misturat from the catering school. It was not up to five minutes after I crossed the river that I was told that a boat had capsized. I was surprised, so I had to rush down to the place to find out who was involved. It was when I got there that I was told that my daughter was among the passengers.”

The distraught father said the incident touched his heart, saying, “The same child, we both went out in the morning only for me to return in the evening, and the next thing I would see was her corpse. She was in her final year of secondary school and preparing for the WAEC exams. I just paid for her WAEC fees. So whenever she returns from school, she resumes to her catering school.”

While citing the flood as the cause of her daughter’s death, the bereaved father said she would have made use of a dedicated motorcycle rider who took her to work and brought her home daily.

Related News

He added that the distance of the canoe ride was less than a minute, as no one ever thought such an accident could happen.

He said, “There is a motorcycle that takes her to school and brings her back home regularly, even to our doorstep, but since the flood started, the rider could not cross into our community. So my daughter had to cross to the other end of the river, where the rider waited to pick her up. The water we are talking about is just about a minute’s ride on the canoe.

“Most of us are still surprised that the water could cause such havoc because whenever flooding happens, we wade through it with our legs. But it was much different this time around. It started on Wednesday, and before Thursday morning, the whole place was filled to the point that we could not go past the water. There used to be a particular sign it gave us that made us prepare by making a wooden bridge for us to cross to the other side, but because of the sudden rush of water this time around, we could not prepare ahead.”

Amoo said Azeezat had always claimed that she wanted to study law at the university.

“That same day, she wrote a list of the things she wanted me to buy for her, and I said I was going to give her the money if I made some sales that day, not knowing that I would not set my eyes on her again,” he added.

Speaking in a similar pensive tone about how dear her late daughter was to her, the father of late Misturat, Ahmed Okunbanjo, said she was at home waiting for her daughter to return when he learnt of the incident.

He said her daughter had taken a break from the catering class penultimate week due to the preparations she was making ahead of her resumption at the University of Ilorin.

According to him, she was later called by her colleagues from the catering school to assist them, which made her return the same week the incident happened.

“My daughter just secured admission to UNILORIN. She was at home last Monday when I asked her why she did not go to her catering school, but she said her boss asked her to rest so she could make adequate preparations ahead of her resumption. So on Monday earlier this week, she said she wanted to assist some of her colleagues at the catering school because they had a lot of work at hand.

“On Thursday evening, I was sitting with some of my friends in the community when we heard the people shouting that a boat had capsized in the river. So we rushed there to assist in the rescue operation. After three people were rescued, we learnt there were still two more. It was at that point that I tried to call my daughter to inform her that she should not bother taking any canoe and that I would come and bring her home, but her number did not go through. That was when I asked if anyone knew her whereabouts, but there was silence among everyone around me until someone told me that my daughter was among the passengers. I had to run back to the water, but we could not retrieve her body that night.”

Sponsored Stories

Okunbanjo further claimed he shared a special bond with her daughter, while he also had a striking semblance with her.

He also spoke about the sheer brilliance she had always exhibited as well as her insistence on studying at UNILORIN.

“I persuaded her to go to her elder sister’s school, but she insisted on studying at UNILORIN until they gave her admission. There was a time when a quiz competition was held in our community, and she was the one who came first. People were surprised that she was my daughter. In fact, she was far more brilliant than her older sister, who is also at the university. She used to correct her sister on certain subjects, and they called her grammarian.

“Anyone who knew me and saw her for the first time would know she was my daughter, as she resembled me a lot. I often called her my personal assistant because she helped me with so many things. I wish I had seen a spiritualist warn me not to allow her to go out that day,” he said.

Okunbanjo said if the government could fix the bridge and make it higher than the level of the flood, the incident wouldn’t reoccur again.

The Chairman of Olorunsogo Community Development Area, Alaba Awosanya, blamed the incident on the excessive water released from the dam, adding that the point where the incident happened used to be dry land.

He said, “After the Oyan Dam was opened, the community became flooded last week Thursday. So we have been using canoes to ferry ourselves in and out of the community. The axis where the incident happened used to be dry land before the flood came, and it is also the major entrance into and out of the community.

“The flood is a perennial problem in the community. Anytime the dam is opened, our community gets flooded, but the volume of water this year was just so much. It has been like four or five years since we witnessed this. The water was so high that it became a problem to wade in and out. That was why we had to employ the services of canoe paddlers. We built the culverts ourselves; it was a communal effort that was later covered by the flood.”