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## 10 Pupils, 2 Women Die In Boat Mishap

Published on February 14, 2012 by pmnews · 1 Comment

The rainstorm that wreaked havoc in Lagos on Monday also left sorrow in its wake in [Otto Awori Local Council Development Area, Ojo](#), Lagos State, southwest Nigeria where [10 pupils](#) and two women drowned after a boat mishap during the rainstorm.

P.M.NEWS gathered that at least [22 primary school pupils](#) and women left a riverine community, [Ojota](#) and were heading to [Agbede Village](#), another riverine community early in the morning for school when the rainstorm caused their boat to capsize.

Ten children were said to have survived while 12 others, including [two women drowned](#). One of the deceased women is said to be the wife of the Baale of [Ojota riverine village](#).

As at the time of filing this report, only the bodies of four children, out of the [12 people that died](#), had been recovered from the river.

P.M.NEWS gathered that the boat used in the transportation did not make use of an engine but was being paddled manually, and it was overcrowded.

The boat was almost getting to [Agbede Village](#) when it was caught in the rainstorm which overturned it. [10 people](#) were rescued by locals.

The occupants of the boat did not make use of life jackets which could have mitigated the impact of the mishap.

After the tragedy, Governor Babatunde Fashola ordered the Commissioner for Rural Development, Pastor Cornelius Ojelabi to immediately visit the area to sympathise with the people.

Ojelabi and a team from the Rural Ministry visited Ojota and Agbede riverine communities yesterday to assess the extent of damage by the storm and report back to the government.

It was weeping and wailing when the government team visited [Ojota village](#) to commiserate with the families of the victims.

A woman whose grand child died in the boat mishap wept uncontrollably while many could not hold back their tears.



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Commiserating with the villagers over the loss, Ojelabi said the governor was concerned about the plight of the people and had sent him to assess the level of damage.

He lamented that the occupants of the boat did not make use of [life jackets](#), saying that there is a law that anyone using the water should wear a life jacket.

Ojelabi was of the view that if the occupants of the capsised boat had worn life jacket, the casualties would have reduced.

He said he came to assess the impact of the damage and see how government could prevent future tragedy.

Ojelabi lamented that there were too many people in the boat paddled manually and that could not cope with such weight.

He called on the community to monitor the activities of those in the boat business and ensure that they did not overload their boats in the bid to make more money.

Speaking after yesterday's rainstorm, Commissioner for the Environment, Mr. Tunji Bello described the incident as effects of climate change which the government had always talked about.

"We have continued on our part to embark on adaptive and mitigative efforts to fight the global scourge.

"We have embarked on pre-rainy season massive cleaning and dredging of canals and drainage channels to prevent flooding as well as embarked on massive enlightenment campaign to sensitise Lagosians on the need to live in a clean and sustainable environment," he said.

Meanwhile, Bello is to appear before members of the Lagos State House of Assembly to explain the reasons for the devastation caused by yesterday's heavy rains despite the state government's efforts to prevent such tragedy.

He is also to explain to the House what strategies his ministry has put in place to reduce the impact of the heavy rains expected this year.

The lawmakers at a plenary session held hours after the tragic rainstorm lamented that though the government had been doing its best, the disaster was not expected so early in the year.

Stressing that the forecast for 2012 shows that there would be heavy rains, they wondered how prepared the state government is to handle the situation and protect life and property of residents.

The lawmakers also called on all the council chairmen in the state to embark on aggressive campaign on the need for the people to desist from dumping refuse into drains, as well as enforcing existing environmental laws to ensure conformity by residents.

The decision was reached after an extensive debate on the devastation which resulted in the absence of one of the lawmakers, Omowunmi Olatunji-Edet.

Her [Oshodi-Isolo](#) Constituency 2 was one of the most affected parts of Lagos and she reportedly went there to assess the extent of damage caused by the rain.



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Member of the House, Gbolahan Yishau, who raised the issue under matters of urgent importance, told his colleagues that the early morning rain caused havoc in many parts of the state, killing two persons and destroying both public and private properties.

The lawmaker representing Eti-Osa Constituency 2, stressed the need for the state Ministry of the Environment to wake up to its responsibility before the situation gets out of hand.

He sympathised with the families of the persons who died after mast fell on them.

Other members of the House who spoke agreed that there was need for an urgent actions.

Chief Whip of the House, Rasaq Balogun, implored the House to embark on Town Hall Meeting and aggressive enlightenment campaign against indiscriminate dumping of refuse.

In his contribution, Sanai Agunbiade said steps should be taken urgently to clear all the drainages and canals in the state, while urging relevant government agencies to enforce the law.

Agunbiade said existing state environmental laws stipulate that adjoining drains in front of buildings should be routinely cleared.

He however said instead of clearing the drains, the residents continue to wait on government.

He therefore called for strict enforcement of the laws, while urging government through its relevant agencies to increase public sensitisation and enlightenment about climate change.

In a related development, the House has urged Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola to, on a compassionate ground direct the Ministries of the Environment, Works and Infrastructure to liaise with relevant authorities managing barracks in the state in order to provide palliatives and reduce the deplorable condition of the barracks.

The House said the state of most of the police, prisons and army barracks in Lagos State is one that would evoke tears from anyone who visits them.

"Many of these barracks were built over 40 years ago without any meaningful renovation or maintenance in recent times thereby resulting in the deplorable state of facilities such as functional toilets, operational septic tanks, potable water systems, flowing drainage, refuse disposal system amongst others," said Gbolahan Yishau, the mover of the motion.

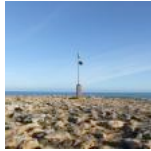
He said the occupants of these barracks are Lagos residents and deserve to live with their families in conducive environment with adequate infrastructure since they seem to be forgotten by the Federal Government which has the responsibility to maintain the barracks.

—Kazeem Ugbo-daga & Eromosele Ebhomele

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**Agborandun**

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