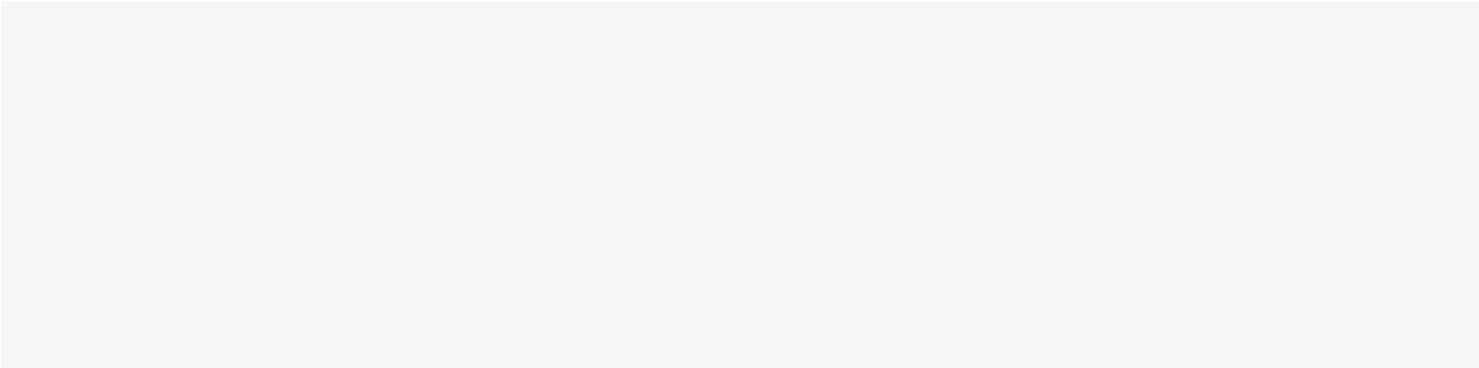


Endless flood disasters trigger anger in Anambra community

•Families of drowned victims in agony, send SOS to Gov Obiano

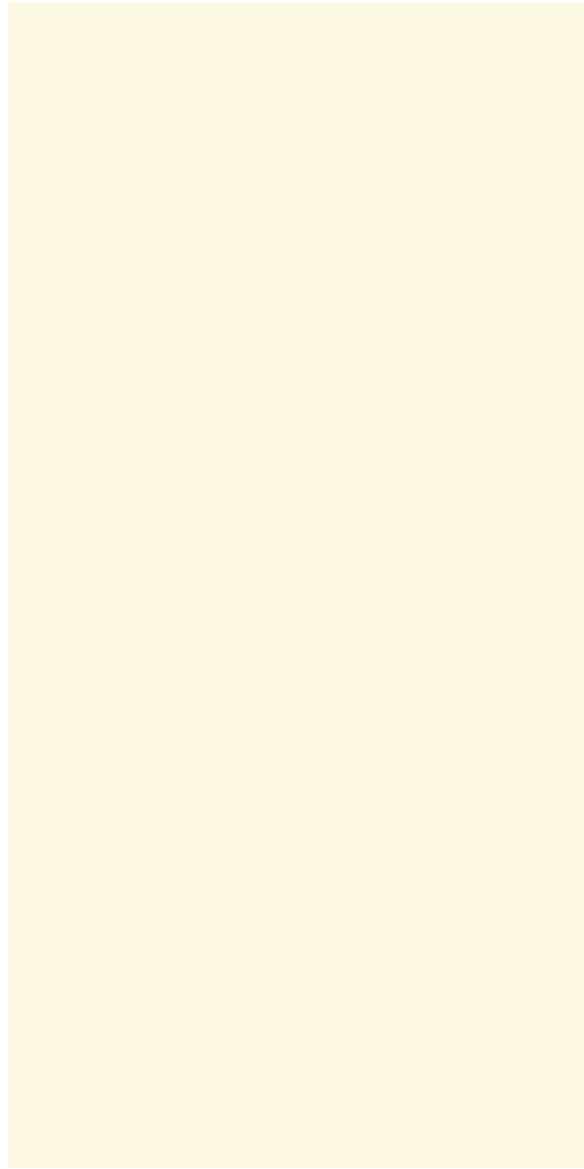
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Residents of Oduke community in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State are living in pain and apprehension as a result of constant flooding, a condition they have suffered for the past five years.

Sandwiched between Obosi and Onitsha through Ezeiweka Road, the community and its people dread rainfall like a plague because of the accompanying hazards and havoc that befall the area whenever it rains.



The late Oduke's wife and her baby

The late Oduke's children

They have been crying to the Anambra State Government to come to their aid in tackling the erosion and flooding challenge brought about by the wrong placement of a drainage channel by a company that handled the construction

of Ezeiweka Road, leading to massive flooding in the area whenever it rains.

Before now, the people had sounded the alarm that, following the magnitude of the flood, lives might be lost, adding to the monumental material losses already incurred. In the past, flooding had damaged schools, hotels, residential buildings, vehicles, household property and crops in the area. In truth, flooding in the area has forced an Obosi indigene to abandon his multi-million-naira hotel built in the area, even as the property is now in ruins. Many schools have been shut and residential buildings have been submerged.

Though unconfirmed reports said about 12 persons have died at different times from the perennial flooding in the past five years that the problem has lingered, residents of the area are yet to recover from the shock of losing two people in one day on November 3, 2018, to the rampaging flood.

The latest victims, Solomon Okafor, 42, and Oluchi Nwafor, a mother of six, died in very painful circumstances in the flood-ravaged area, leaving their families in sorrow and tears.

Following the torrential rainfall of that fateful day, the two were declared missing until their bodies were discovered the next morning in very bad shape after being tossed around by the flood.

Their family members who spoke to Daily Sun described the last Christmas and New Year festivities as very sad for them. They said life has not been the same for them since the incident.

Ngozi Okafor, wife of the late Solomon, who was the first to speak, looked dejected and forlorn as she stared into space momentarily, thinking of what the future held for her. As she spoke, an 18-month-old baby, who was crying intermittently was strapped to her back. Ngozi, a pregnant housewife, recalled the incidents of the tragic day.

She said her husband, who, until his death, was a supplier of musical instruments to clients, left home that day with high hopes and expectations, with no premonition that danger was lurking around the corner.

“He told me he was going to Nnewi to see a client, and I didn’t feel anything when it began to rain that evening and he was yet to come back. But I became apprehensive when night came and he was not yet home. I called his number and it was switched off. I couldn’t sleep that night. The whole thing still seems like a movie to me till now because, when his brother called me the next morning to tell me that he had been found, I never knew he was referring to his dead body. He was swept away by the high volume of flood and I can imagine how he must have battled to come out alive from the surge until he breathed his last and gave up.

“I want to see my husband again alive and healthy. It pains me to the marrow that he had to die of this man-made disaster we are facing here while government seems to have turned a blind eye to our predicament. How will I cope with this my small child and the unborn baby in these hard times?” she lamented, even as she appealed for help.

Okechukwu Victor, 16, first son of Oluchi Nwafor, another victim of the flood, was a pitiable sight when he narrated the predicament of the family. Now orphaned by the mother’s death, Okechukwu lost his father in 2015, and his mother became the breadwinner of the family. He told the reporter that his late mum had already given

four of his siblings out to different families as helps so that they could sustain themselves while he, as an SS2 student, was also engaged in menial jobs during weekends to survive.

He said he never had a chance to even say goodbye to his mother because he left very early in the morning to work as a labourer in a construction site the very day the woman died in the flood. Grace Ekuma, the family's landlady, explained that the family had remained stranded since the woman died in the flood.

Throwing more light on the situation, president-general, Oduke Landlords' Association, Nicholas Okechukwu, also in an emotion-laden voice, said the community had made several entreaties to the state government to declare an emergency in the area, all to no avail.

Presenting several correspondences to the governor, the state ministry of works and other government agencies dating back to 2014 to back up his claims, Okechukwu said most buildings in the community have collapsed, while others are on the verge of collapsing following the spate of flooding in the area.

The president-general said the community was faced with the temptation of voting against Obiano during the governorship election of 2017 in the state but the people had to rescind the decision at a certain stage when his government showed signs of commitment to solving their problem by deploying a construction company to the area just before the election.

However, he noted that the construction company worsened the situation when it began to sand-fill the area without first of all taking care of the flood channel.

“We complained seriously but nothing came out of it. At the end, they even stopped work and the same flood had to descend on the sand-filled areas creating deep gullies instead. We cannot stop crying out for help and it is also unheard of that, since we lost two people from this problem, neither the governor nor any government representative has deemed it fit to visit us to assuage our feelings or even make another on-the-spot assessment of the situation for immediate action,” he said.

When the reporter contacted the Commissioner for Works in Anambra State, Marcel Ifejiofor, for comments, he said he could not talk on any government position on the phone, and he was not forthcoming in giving a formal appointment for a one-on-one interview.

Efforts to also reach out to the TAMAD Construction Company, the firm handling the project, proved abortive as calls made to the cell phone of the managing director were not answered.