

emi Folaranmi, Yenagoa

Protest yesterday rocked Yenagoa, Bayelsa State capital, over the death of two brothers at Agudama area while trying to cross the flooded Epie- Creek that stretched from Igbogene to down Yenagoa.

The Epie- Creek, which has been neglected over the years, is prone to flood and usually become dangerous to cross for residents of the area.

According to investigation, the victims, Jeff Julius, 22, and Adeni Julius, 24, were among seven persons being ferried across the Epie- Creek with a canoe from the Mbama/ Yenagoa road to the residential area when the canoe capsized.

While locals around the canoe mishap were able to save five of the passengers, the current of the flood was so strong and it swept the deceased away.

All efforts to retrieve the bodies were futile until Sunday afternoon when they floated. On seeing the bodies, residents of area took to the streets to protest the neglect and failure of the government to construct a bridge across the Epie- Creek.

Mr. Endwell Azibayam, a resident, said it is saddening that government has turned blind eye to the suffering of the people of the area.

“Yearly, people from this neighbourhood die because of flood. On Friday, at about 11pm, seven persons were crossing from Mbama/Yenagoa Road to our area when the boat capsized. We managed to rescue five persons but two people were swept away by the current of the flood. Since that day, we have been searching for their bodies until this morning we discovered them.

Because government failed to build a bridge for us, we built a wooden bridge that we managed until the flood came and swept it away.

So, the only way we can connect to the outside world is to cross the Epie Creek with canoe.

“If not for that reason, those boys wouldn’t have died in the manner they did on Friday.”

One of the protesters, Mr. Stanley Ikogi, said residents of the area are pained with manner of death of the two boys.

“We are protesting the death of the boys because of government’s total neglect of our community. It is painful to see those children die in the manner they did,” he said.

An uncle to the deceased, Mr. Julius Diepreye, speaking on behalf of the Julius family, regretted the death of his nephews, noting that the government had continuously failed to live up to its responsibilities.

“The people living across the Epie Creek have been suffering for more than 20 years. Since the creation of Bayelsa State in 1996, every year we lose people to flood.

“This is because government has failed to construct the road linking this area to Igbogene.

“For government to build a 100 meter bridge across the creek is a problem. So, what we normally do every year is to use a canoe to cross over to the city each time there is flood.

“If the state government cannot do it, then the NDDC should do it for us. Let it not be that it is only when there is election, they come and solicit for our votes.”