

MegaCity

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Rain of tears, death, sorrow in Ondo communities

It was meant to be a rain of mercy, given the drought that preceded this year's rainy season. The rain was to water plants and cool the environment, but it has brought with it sorrow, pain and death to communities in Akure North, Akure South and Ifedore local government areas of Ondo State, **BABATOPE OKEOWO** reports

Aside from civil service jobs, farming is the highest employer of labour in Ondo State because the state is predominantly agrarian. This usually makes many people look forward to the rainy season every year. Apart from watering the plants, the weather becomes cool and water for drinking and household chores would be available. But rather than bring happiness for the people, this year's rains have brought sorrow, pains and death.

New groom as first casualty

Rain is supposed to bring grace as without rain, there would be no life. But this June rain has led to the death of a newly married husband, Mr Glory Jato in Oba-Ile in Akure North Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Jato, who lived at Bethel Estate, a community in Oba Ile, in Akure North lost his life to flooding as the deluge menace continued to ravage more communities in Akure and its environs.

According to the landlord's association, Jato, who was believed to be a Federal Government worker, was said to be coming from work when he was swept away by flood waters. The Assistant Secretary of the Landlord's Association of Bethel Estate, Oba Ile, Pastor Gbenga Ojologbe, said the community needed government intervention to help dredge the nearby water channel to prevent future occurrences of flooding.

Several communities in the community suffered from severe flooding as many access roads were cut off due to rainfall that lasted for more than 24 hours.

Ojologbe said the water had turned to death traps that always take lives year in year out, as properties and residents were no longer safe from the constant threat of the river. He said all the efforts made by the community to ensure that the flood kept it at bay every year always remained futile.



A woman wades through the flood after a heavy downpour damaged the road

His words "We are using this opportunity to draw attention of both the Federal Government and State Government and the local government to what is actually going on in our community. This is the main access to the community, the flood is already taking what we have used our productive years of our lives to construct. Everything you can see on the bridge is actually the effort of the landlords of the community, we discovered that the flood will just come and push everything away, so we are calling on the government to come to our aid."

"On Friday we lost a soul here and that is why we are calling and we want everyone to know that this is the main access to the floodwaters coming from Ijapo, Alagbaka, Oja Oba, so immediately there is rain, was have no access to our roads again."

Lamentation

Also, one of the landlords, Mr Olusola Osupala said once it rained, access to the estate was always cut off. Osupala said the community had requested and written to several intervention agencies to help save the situation, but to no avail.

"Over the years, we have been suffering from flooding in this community and all that you can see in this estate is community effort for our electricity, we contributed, we bought the transformer. In fact, a couple of days ago, someone died on this bridge because of the flood, he drowned, we don't have access to the bridge, and we don't have access to our home once it rains. We can no longer continue like this, we need the government to dredge this river for us."

Another landlady in the community, Mrs Oluwatosin Ibitoye said the death of the young man was painful as she was part of the rescue party to save the life of the young man.

Ibitoye said once it rained the road would be cut off and residents and children would not be able to go to work and school respectively.

Her words "This road is a major road to all the communities and we appeal to the state government to come to our rescue; we do lose lives during the rainy season. On Friday, we lost a young married man to this flood, which is so painful so we appealed to the state government and we appeal to Ak-

eredolu to come to our rescue."

Incessant flooding

The residents of Irese, Aaye and Ijare communities in Ifedore Local Government Area of the state lamented the floods that have rendered many of them homeless. Consequently, they have cried out to the state government to assist them in cushioning the effect of the excessive flood that continues to submerge the access road to the town.

The residents, who lamented how the flood had taken over the road, said that the only "tarred road" to the town had been in deplorable condition for years and gradually impassable due to the rainy season. They explained that the community had been suffering from deep potholes that developed over the years, adding that cars, especially goods-laden vehicles, could not ply easily on the road without breaking down.

The pothole-ridden road, which has been in a poor state, also links Irese and Aaye communities to Ijare town - the towns in Ifedore Local Government Area of the state.

While lamenting the predicament of residents of the community, the Olu of Irese town, Oba Ahmed Saka, expressed worries over the danger of plying the road during the rainy season because it is always flooded.

Oba Saka said the excessive flood has brought untold hardship to the community, noting that goods and property worth millions of naira have been lost to the flood, which entered into residents' homes and shops.

While blaming the deplorable condition of the major access road into the town for the constant flooding, the Irese traditional ruler said vehicle owners in the town and commuters spend unquantifiable man-hours anytime the road is submerged by the flood.

Monarch speaks

The monarch said: "Although, we appreciate the state government for the ongoing construction from Akure to Irese road. It is a kind gesture and it is a welcome development to our people. But

we are pleading that the same gesture should be extended to Irese and Aaye towns in Ifedore because this is the only road that links both Ifedore and Akure South together. And in doing this, this issue of flood taking over the major road of the community would stop and residents would finally heave a sigh of relief without any fear of their house, shops or businesses being submerged."

Governor visits flooded areas

The state's Acting Governor, Hon Lucky Aiyedatiwa visited areas affected by flooding in Akure, the state capital to sympathise with victims and carry out an on-the-spot assessment for possible intervention.

The torrential downpour degenerated into flooding that affected several areas in the state capital. Some of the areas visited were, Irese-Ijare Bridge, Aye Community in Irese, Ala River at Aiyedun Quarters, Akure High School axis and Ala River at Araromi Road, all in Akure.

Aiyedatiwa enjoined residents to avoid dumping waste into drains, streams or rivers and patronise the State Waste Management Authority and the Private Sector Participants. He appealed to residents to always embrace good environmental habits saying the government was taking steps to contain flooding in the state.

"We want to appeal to residents to desist from throwing waste into drains. This act causes hindrance in water flow thus makes it difficult. Please, you have to cooperate with the environmental officers and pay your dues adequately for them to pack your waste. The government of Ondo State has released counterpart funds to partner with other relevant agencies to expand the water ways for easy flow of water. I want to assure you that there will be prompt intervention to clear the water channels for easy movement of water," he said.

Also, Abitogun and the Chairman of Akure South Local Government, Gbenga Olaniyi assured of quick intervention to avert further flooding.

The Olurese of Irese, Oba Ahmed Saka and the Alaaye of Aaye community, Oba Peter Adeoye thanked the Acting Governor for the prompt response as they look forward to government assistance in no distant time.