

## Ogun residents live in fear as flood ravages 57 communities



A flooded area in the state

Ogun State is one of the states hit by flood during this year's rainy season. After being hit about three different times in the last couple of months, **Daud Olatunji** reports the flood that occurred in about 57 communities in the state recently.

After two previous flood incidents, residents of Sango Ota in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State were still in a state of shock when their community was flooded again recently, destroying property worth millions of naira and leaving about five children hospitalised. The recent flood which was as a result of a two-day downpour that started on Thursday, August 30 through Friday, August 31 and Saturday, September 1, left about 57 communities in nine local government areas affected, rendering many people homeless.

Though, there was no report of past flood claiming lives, the recent one was however reported to have claimed the life of a child who was swept away. Some children were also injured as they struggled with the flood to avoid being swept away. The Ogun State Commissioner for Environment, Dr Adeleke Adedoyin, confirmed the incident to the **Nigerian Tribune** on phone, saying the affected children were responding to treatment.

He however denied the report that a child was swept away by the flood. "Nobody died in the flood. The story that a child was swept away is unfounded and not true", he said. Contrary, however, to the statement of the commissioner, the Community Development Association (CDA) in Sango Ota insisted that a child was swept away by the flood.

**Nigerian Tribune** learnt that the CDA sent a representative to a radio station in the state, a day after the incident to announce the enormity of the disaster and to press on their insistence that a life was lost. When the **Nigerian Tribune** visited the area to get first-hand information on the extent of the flood, as well as to confirm if a life was truly lost, residents, while lamenting their loss, showed the house from which a child was swept away by the flood to this reporter.

At the time of filing this report, most of the houses in the community were still immersed in water and efforts were being made to pump out the water using electrical pumping machines. Unfortunately, at the house where a child was alleged to have been swept away, all occupants had vacated the building. As a result of perennial flood, many residents have started thinking it wise to move out of the area. They said what was witnessed this year was bound to happen again if proper drainages were not put in place.

Some victims who spoke with the **Nigerian Tribune** expressed their grievances on the activities of a construction company which was working on the Abeokuta-Lagos Road. They said the situation was made worse as the company allegedly diverted water that was supposed to pass through waterways to the community, which is very close to the construction site.

A 78-year-old victim, Chief Jacob Bankole, explained how he was almost swept away by the water that gushed into his house. The septuagenarian told the **Nigerian Tribune** that because he was partially blind, it was difficult for him to know where the water was coming from. "We have suffered a lot," Chief Bankole said. "Since the flood, I have been staying outside as I have not been able to enter my building, which is still filled with a large volume of water. My sitting room, bedroom, kitchen, are flooded.

Describing the incident as absolutely worrisome, the teacher who retired 21 years ago said, "I built this house in 1968 and such a thing has never happened here before." Another victim, Mrs Adebisi Oyerinde explained that it was only by the grace of God that many children were not swept away by the flood. "No one could really recollect how it happened but many people had prepared for the worst after the two-day continuous rain.

"Since the incident, many people have relocated from the area."

**Nigerian Tribune** gathered that many residents of the area are living in fear of another nightmare. This time around, it is not the coming of a non-stop rain, but the news that filtered round the community that when the Abeokuta-Lagos Road gets completed, it would be a five-feet above-the-ground road, which would further aid the flow of water into the community whenever it rains, something the community believe would lead to perennial flooding of the area.

What is of great concern again is that most of the communities lack proper drainage system. A good example is Araromi 2, of Sango-Ota in Ado-Odo/Ota local Government, which is not far from the Abeokuta-Lagos road. This community lacks proper drainages. As a result of this, youths of the area recently stormed the Ministry of Works at Abeokuta, the state capital, to protest about their communities' situation.

According to the youth leader, Mr Tokunbo Bankole, who confided in this reporter, many of the youth would have thronged the streets to express their feeling and this would have led to a breakdown of law and order. He said they allowed common sense to prevail, thus the reason for their protest at the Ministry of Works.

Mr Bankole said their protest was because it was learnt that the road being constructed was going to be five feet above the ground level, thus making the recent flood experienced in the communities a child's play compared with what could occur in the future. The youth charged the government to make provision for the construction of proper drainages for the communities so that future disasters could be averted.

When the **Nigerian Tribune** visited officials of the construction company at the road site to confirm whether the communities close to the road would be prone to flood once the road is finished, a man who was said to be the project supervisor, referred this reporter to the company's head office or the Ministry of Works, as he could not comment on that.