

## Special Report

### ANAMBRA, DELTA DEADLY FLOODS:

# 70-yr-old killed while sleeping in submerged home

•Survivors run out of food, drugs, clothing, bedding  
•Farmers out for premature harvest

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The destruction and deaths caused by flood across the country has continued, leaving more people with sorrow and sad tales.

Both urban and rural dwellers are not left out of the anguish that followed the natural disaster, which the Federal Government said has damaged many roads across the nation. So bad is the effect on road infrastructure that the Minister of Works, Babatunde Fashola, last week, said the extent of damage couldn't be quantified.

Of the deaths resulting from the natural disaster, the death of scores in Anambra boat mishap left the entire nation bereaved. The casualties were escaping from their flooded communities. According to the boat driver, Desmond Amugo, it was caused by a heavy wave that affected the smooth operation of the boat, causing it to hit one of the pillars supporting the Umunnakwe/Ossomala bridge.

Riverine communities in the state have been submerged by the ravaging flood.

The overflow of River Niger and downpour in the past few days fuelled the rise of the water level.

Houses, farmlands, markets and business houses have been swallowed by the flood.

Local Government Areas (LGAs) mostly affected are Anambra East, Anambra West, Ayamelum, Ogburu, as well as parts of Ihiala and Ekwusigbo.

At the last count, no fewer than 50 communities have been submerged.

In Ogburu LGA for instance, flood has taken over Ogbu Ikpele, Akili Ogidi, Obeagwe, Ossomala, Umunankwo, Ogbakuba, Ochuche, Akili Ozzor, Atani, Ohita, Odekepe, Amiyi, Iyowa, Ogbekwu, Okoti, Ochuche Umudu and parts of the slum Okpoko near the commercial city of Onitsha.

It is also the same situation in Anambra West where all schools, health facilities and people's houses in Anam have been submerged.

Last week, a 70-year-old man, Mr. Sunday Mesiobi was found dead in his bedroom at Ogbu Akpoma, Atani, which was flooded at night while he was asleep.

Mesiobi, who went to bed at night, did not wake up only for his neighbours to discover his submerged body in the room.

### 70-year-old

The flood rose very high at night while the septuagenarian was asleep and drowned him. In an emotion-laden reaction, Mr. Anizzechukwu Awogu, the immediate past chairman of Ogburu local government area and House of Representatives candidate of All

Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) for Ogburu Federal Constituency for the 2023 election, who is Mesiobi's uncle, said the submerged body was discovered by relations who went to check on him in the morning.

According to Awogu, the deceased was the only one left in the house after he had earlier evacuated his wife and children due to the ravaging flood that had affected most communities in Ogburu. The remains of Mesiobi had been deposited at the Atani mortuary.

Awogu said: "It was not clear the exact time the incident happened, but members of the family said his lifeless body was found when one of them came to check on him and after calling his name repeatedly without response, they went into the room and found his body in the pool of the water."

"His children sighted his cloth floating on the water inside his room and when the cloth was pulled up, it turned out that his body was under the water."

Awogu expressed sadness at the unfortunate incident which happens every year.

"This issue has gone beyond asking people to converge on a particular location to live as displaced people. We need more of a community-based approach where community leaders will have more direct contact with victims," he said.

### Communities

Although he commended the state government for the efforts it had made to mitigate the effect of the flood disaster, Awogu called for a change in response strategy.

A former member of the House of Representatives, Alam Ogene, whose Obeagwe community is one of the worst hit, called on the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), to come to the rescue of the victims.

He said: "It is a terrible sight in Ogburu as a result of the flood disaster. The human and environmental conditions here are pathetic and require urgent action from government to alleviate the sufferings of the victims, most of whom have lost all their belongings to the flood disaster."

"The flood victims urgently

need relief materials and other assistance from government and its agencies, such as NEMA and SEMA. These agencies should rise to the occasion and bring urgent succour to the people to avert the outbreak of diseases associated with such incidents."

"Most of the people urgently need food, clothing materials, beddings, medical supplies and shelter. Anambra State government should also liaise with President-Generals of the various communities in Ogburu to coordinate relief efforts to ensure that they are prudently and transparently distributed in the best interest of the victims."

"NEMA, SEMA and the state government should consider this as a serious and desperate SOS message and treat it with the urgency, humaneness and responsibility that it requires."

### Loans

Some of the victims, who spoke to *Sunday Vanguard*, said they have become used to the annual occurrence during which they usually relocate to safer communities. Mr. Chibuike Ossai, a farmer, said he lost most of the crops he planted.

Ossai said: "The flood in the riverine communities is an annual occurrence that we experience in this part of the state. But what happened this year is similar to what happened in 2012 when we experienced the worst flood ever. In January this year, I borrowed N300,000 from a microfinance bank which I invested in farming."

"The crops, including yams, cassava, potatoes and pumpkins were doing well and I was looking forward to having a bumper harvest this farming season, only for flood to submerge the entire farms. My house was even flooded and I had to relocate my family from Ogburu to Oba in Idemili North local government area."

"That loan is still hanging on my neck and I don't know how I am going to repay it. The most worrisome is that another farming season is coming and I don't know how to find money to plant crops."

Another farmer, Chijioko Nwabisi, said that following the speed at which the flood

### DELTA

In Delta, victims are counting their losses as the situation continues to worsen daily.

Across Ndokwa-East LGA the flood has taken over most of the 73 communities. Some parts of Asaba, the state capital, Patani, Uzere, Araya, Igibide, Enwhe, Ofeh, Otomoro, Irt, Emede and other communities in Isoko-South LGA were not spared.

So far, six persons have lost their lives to the natural disaster in Ndokwa-East.

Elsewhere in Uwheru, Unenurhie, Asa and other communities in Ughelli North and South LGAs, the situation is not different as farmlands and properties worth millions of naira have been lost to the flood.

Similarly, roads leading to some of the areas have been completely cut off with residents now resorting to the use of canoes to evacuate trapped members of their families. The ever busy Ugbolu/Illah Road, Oshimili North LGA has been cut off, with civil servants coming to work in Asaba from the axis going through hell.

Speaking on the ordeal of his people, an indigene of Aboh community, Tony Osborg, said the kingdom has been completely cut off from the rest of Delta State.

### Cut off

He said: "Farmers were forced to prematurely harvest their produce while at the same time struggling to relocate from the already flooded houses. From the look of things, this might be equivalent or even worse than the 2012 flooding."

Tens of communities along the River Niger are already losing invaluable traditional ancestral assets due to the flood. This is a national emergency."

One of the flood victims in Owodokpokpor - Igibide, Isoko-South LGA, Mr. Alex Ovie said: "Although the Nigerian Meteorological Agency had alerted Nigerians about torrential rains and flooding in some parts of the country, our people of Owodokpokpor-Igibide in obviously did not envisage the magnitude of floods and destruction that occurred in the community in the last two weeks."

"This year's flood came with rage sparing nothing on its way. Houses and farmlands are submerged forcing some of the farmers to carry out premature harvest of their crops to avoid total loss."

President General of the Igibide Community, Chief Egba Ugolo, described the situation as alarming, saying some of the flood victims are now refugees in their community.

He said: "As we speak the flood is increasing every day. Two primary schools have closed to protect the children. The access road to Oteri, Egbu and Owodokpokpor has been covered by water and most farms have been taken over by flood. We pray that the number of houses that have been affected will not increase because a lot of people have been displaced from their homes."

Accusing government of not being proactive in emergencies, Ugolo said: "Before now, officials from the Ministry of Environment came to the community to assess the canals and we appealed to government to open up the canals so that some of the water can empty into them. They promised to come back but didn't."

President General of Uwheru community, Mr. MacPherson Igbedi, said flood has inflicted untold hardship on his people, saying "It is very devastating. Our people don't have a place to lay their heads and all farmlands and properties have been destroyed."

### Foreshore walls

Also, House of Assembly candidate of the All Progressives Congress, APC in Patani Local Government Area, Raymos Guanah, called on

federal, state governments, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to urgently take steps to assuage the sufferings of victims.

Guanah, after a tour of Abari, Patani, Koloware, Aven, and other parts of the local government, stressed the need for an urgent step to be taken.

Insisting that solution to perennial flooding in the local government is for government to construct foreshore walls from Abari through Patani, Agoloma, Toru-Angiama, Uduophori to Adobu, he called on the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and NEMA to immediately send relief materials like food, medication, blankets, and mosquito nets among others to the people.

Reacting to the development, Chairman of Ndokwa East Local Government Area Mr. Juan Governor, said the flood took a new dimension in the council beyond what was experienced in 2012.

"We have also made arrangements for short-term harvestable crops to aid farm produce and source of income as a post-flood relief measures by the council," he added.

Meanwhile, the State 2022 Flood Disaster Management Committee, last week, set up Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs camps in Asaba and Ozoro.