

Our miraculous escape, by crashed building's survivors

PROVIDENCE can be both kind and cruel. In the unmitigated disaster of Tuesday's building collapse at Ebute Meta, Lagos, the Unmoved Mover gave a family cause for limitless thanksgiving.

For Mrs. Bunmi Obaro

- **Death toll now 37, survivors 56**
- **National housing code coming**

*By Regina Akpabio, Odita Sunday,
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and her four children, the anguish at the sight of so many deaths, and plea for

life by others still trapped in the rubble, can only be another reason to give

thanks to the Almighty.

Her husband had died three years ago, leaving pangs of pain. But of the Tuesday building collapse, which has claimed at least 37 lives, she is alive to tell the story, along with her four children and grandmother,

who came around on a visit.

And, it was only a chance family outing that saved their lives. They returned home about 7.40 p.m. The building had collapsed five minutes

Continued on Page 2

Survivors narrate escape

Continued from Page 1

earlier.

Another survivor, Mrs. Patience Okoh is not so happy. Despite having her life back from the tragic incident, the 60-year-old grandmother is sad, very sad. Reason: She saw the dead bodies of her daughter, Awele, and son-in-law, Broderick Mordi, being carried out of the rubble. More painful is that the late daughter was carrying her first pregnancy since being married in 2004.

About 56 persons have been confirmed rescued from the disaster, while the Lagos State government has sealed off three other houses in the area, believed to belong to the developer of the crashed building.

Also, the state House of Assembly ordered a general audit of all buildings, while the Federal Government announced plans for a national housing code.

As the excavation entered the third day yesterday, five more bodies were recovered from the rubble. Some of the survivors

identified the bodies of a couple that had moved into the building only a month ago. The couple were so new that the neighbours did not know their names. The wife was said have carried a few months pregnancy. Mrs Okoh is receiving treatment in a health centre. She told *The Guardian* that she saw bodies of her daughter and her son-in-law being lifted out of the rubble.

She said: "I live in Ajegunle but I came to visit my daughter and her husband, Mr. Broderick and Mrs. Awele Mordi that Tuesday. I knew they died because I saw their bodies being lifted out of the rubble. My daughter was carrying her first pregnancy after being married since 2004. As for me, only God knows how He saved my life".

But testimonies flowed the way of Obaro's family. Mrs. Obaro, the mother of Yinka, Sunday, Segun and Bukola were not at home when the incident occurred. The rest of the family, who with their

grandmother were watching a popular television show, were also rescued.

One of the children, Segun said: "I teach at one private school in the area. I decided to come home and have some time with my grandma. On getting home, I observed that the house was shaking and some blocks were falling off. It was then that I dashed out to raise an alarm".

And if there was a hero to the saga, it was Sunday, who time and again dived into the building to save some of the residents, including his grandmother.

But debris from the building fell on Sunday and trapped him in his desperate attempt to save one of a set of twins. The child, Kehinde, died.

Equally lucky was Mr. Onu Agba who sustained a minor injury on the forehead.

Agba told *The Guardian* yesterday: "It was a trauma nobody envisaged. If not that my family travelled home, perhaps, they would have been trapped. I owe my escape to God."

The bodies of five more dead bodies were pulled

out of the rubble yesterday. According to rescue officials at the scene, four lifeless bodies, three ladies and one man, were recovered in the early hours and the fifth was pulled out in the afternoon.

Still recovering from the shock, one of the survivors, Abike Odushola who occupied a shop in the building, cried to the government for help as all her dreams of livelihood had been lost through the incidents.

She said: "I want to thank almighty God for sparing my life, because I would have been among those people that were dead in the incident. My sister occupied two shops there, she was using one as hair dressing salon, selling cosmetic materials and the other one for video cassette and compact disk rentage. But now, everything is gone. Our means of livelihood is gone. So, government should please come to our rescue."

Miss Abike put the worth of the materials she lost to the incident at N200,000.00.

Continued on Page 4

Survivors narrate escape

Continued from Page 2

Alaba Odediran, a lady survivor told *The Guardian* that the occupants of the building had earlier complained to the landlord about the poor state of the building.

"We learnt that the building was approved for only two-storey building, but the man went ahead to erect a 36-flat, four-storey building with about 20 shops.

"When we were about occupying the shop about four years go, we didn't really appreciate the condition of the house. But because we were in a hurry, we had no option then."

She continued: "We complained to him about last month when he came that sometimes, we could not close the door very well, sometimes when we were sweeping the floor, it would begin to produce some unnecessary dust and so on. He said okay, that he would find something to do."

The Lagos State government has ordered the immediate sealing off of

House Number 46, 49 and 77B of the Bola Street.

The building were said to belong to the owner of the collapsed building.

The Lagos State Police Command will in two weeks time submit its report on the remote cause of collapse. The state Commissioner of Police Mr. Emmanuel Adedun and the Deputy Commissioner of police incharge of the State's Criminal Investigation Department, Panti, Yaba, Lagos have invited the developer of the building and some residents of the area for questioning.

The State House of Assembly has also ordered general audit of all buildings in Lagos, to ascertain their safety for habitation and approvals for individual construction.

The Assembly, which passed this resolution after debating on the collapsed building, further directed the State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development to embark on general audit of buildings to establish whether they comply with building planning law.