

Bricklayer dies, two others injured during heavy rains in Rivers

Peterside to Wike: reactivate flood control Master Plan in Rivers

•Govt: residents dumping refuse in drains

From Mike Odiegwu, Port Harcourt

ONE person died and two others were injured in a building collapse in a part of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Tuesday.

The victims whose names could not be ascertained at the time of filing this report were said to be bricklayers who were working on a cracked building during heavy rainfall.

Police command spokesman Nnamdi Omoni, a Superintendent of Police did not reply to the message asking him to confirm the report.

A source close to the scene said: "The Bricklayer was engaged to patch up a crack on a residential building at Woji/Helenwo axis when high current flood generated by heavy rains caused the building to fell while he was on the job killing him instantly, two other persons were also injured during in the house."

Also, some residents of the state are now counting their losses from the harsh effects of the rain, which left many families homeless, sacked many businesses, including malls, shut down church activities and schools as they were submerged in the flood.

Major roads and streets in the state capital were flooded in the several hours of rains, causing difficulties for motorists and passengers to move; vehicles swam through the flood and smaller vehicles broke down, causing more traffic on the roads.

Governor Nyesom Wike yesterday urged council chairmen to be ready to take on flood emergencies.

THE 2015 governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Rivers State, Dr Dakuku Peterside, has urged Governor Nyesom Wike to urgently reactivate the drainage master plan put in place by his predecessor, Rotimi Amaechi.

Dr Peterside spoke against the terrible flooding being experienced in several parts of Port Harcourt and Rivers State.

He lamented that Rivers people have suffered untold hardship as a result of the flooding, which had long ago been predicted by the Nigeria Metrological Agency (NIMET).

According to him, former Governor Amaechi's administration had put in place a drainage master plan for the city of Port Harcourt and was already being executed before he left office in 2015 but was, however, abandoned by Wike.

Peterside, a former commissioner of works in Rivers State, blamed the Wike-led administration for not paying attention to early warning signals from NIMET but rather chose to blame Rivers people who are already suffering from lack of jobs and economic empowerment.

"Our people are traumatised, a lot of persons are displaced, we have lost several goods and properties estimated at over N3bn, social and economic life has been disrupted because the state government slept off, our people are suffering.

"The governor awards projects from his office without going through the due process and the very important Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which has unfortunately led to pain and agony by the people.

"It is even more shocking that the state government is yet to respond, even if half-heartedly to the cries of the people but has chosen to blame everybody other than itself. A responsive government should by now be engaging and looking for ways out of the crisis.

"Port Harcourt has never had it this bad and it can only mean that the state's relevant ministries, departments, and agencies are either incompetent in carrying out their duties or have been starved of necessary funds to function optimally," Peterside said.

The former director-general of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) called on the government to

immediately mobilise resources to ameliorate the sufferings of the people.

"With heavy rains expected in coming weeks as predicted by NIMET, it will only be natural that the Rivers state government immediately activate the moribund emergency management agency that can react swiftly to serious situations and arrest whatever difficulty the people may be facing.

"This is the time for the state government to show compassion rather than grandstanding and looking for whom to blame for its ineptitude and maladministration. Our people deserve better than this and it is the responsibility of the government to provide solutions," he said.

The Rivers State Government, however, accused the people of dropping refuse in drains.

Commissioner for Information and Communications Paulinus Nsirim said residents must play their part in programmes designed by the government to address the problem.

He said: "The present administration under Governor Nyesom Wike is desirous to make Rivers State a destination of choice and that is why the government has embarked on massive infrastructural development in line with its urban renewal programme.

"So, what is expected of those living and doing business in Rivers State now, is to co-operate with government to ensure that the urban renewal programme and the plan by government to make this state a destination of choice is realised".

He insisted that the state government could not do it alone as it required the support of corporate organisations, civil society groups, religious organisations and the media to enlighten the publics on the need to behave as responsible citizens.

"We believe that if the citizens cooperate with government, as Government is out to ensure that everyone living and doing business in the State does so in a healthy environment, we believe that in the next few days or weeks we will find a solution to this (flooding)," he said.

Oyigbo, Okrika, Tai, and Ogu/Bolo.

The governor was represented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Tammy Danagogo.

He urged residents of the state on the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle, particularly in the way they dispose of their wastes.

Danagogo said: "His Excellency, Governor Nyesom Wike, has directed me to interface with NEMA, council chairmen, and relevant ministries to guarantee that all parties know their roles to avert the expected flood that may result in the displacement of our people.

"I believe that by the time you synergize your experiences with the expertise from NEMA, we should be able to work and provide solutions against flood disaster in our state.

"I further urge residents of our dear state to imbibe good sanitary habits. Do not dump refuse in the gutters or build on water channels. Such crude habits will only compound flood situations across the state."

The South-South Zonal Coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Godwin Tepikor, urged the government to prepare for the looming flood.

According to him, the rains would be severe by the second week of November and urged all persons in flood-prone communities to be prepared and move out to designated camps if need be.

•Malls, roads flooded •Wike to council chairmen, others: prepare for emergencies

From Rosemary Nwisi,
Port Harcourt

Wike spoke during a meeting with the chairmen, heads of Ministries/ Departments

and Agencies (MDA) on the 2021 Nigerian Metrological Agency (NiMET) and the Nigerian Hydrological Service Agency (NIHSA) flood predictions for the state.

The federal government agencies had mid-year named 16 Local Government Councils of the state among areas that would experience flooding this rainy season.

They are Port Harcourt, Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Asari Toru, Akuku Toru, Etche, Eleme, Abua/Odual, Andoni, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Obio/Akpor, Khana,

Appeal Court to hear wrongful

•From left: