

I was saved by a phone

• A survivor's dramatic story

... 50 dead, 50 rescued

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Sunday Aborisade, Olalekan Adetayo and
Adejuwon Soyinka

BUT for her GSM handset, Tanwa, a mother of twins, would have been one of those that lost their lives when a four-storey building in Ebute-Meta on the Lagos Mainland col-

lapsed on Tuesday.

Although the 30-year-old woman lost Taiwo, one of her twins, she summoned courage after almost 19 hours under the rubble and made some

calls to her husband.

It was through the telephone calls that rescue workers, comprising men of the Lagos State Ambulance Services, the Red Cross, Julius Berger Nigeria Plc,

Stabilini Visiononi and Lagos State Fire Service, were able to trace where she and her second baby were trapped.

"I can only describe my survival as a GSM miracle,"

she told the rescue workers and sympathisers.

Tanwa said she sensed danger when the building shook violently and then sank in a little.

At this stage, she said, "People started making frantic efforts at running out."

Tanwa who lived on the second floor of the building could however not make it down the stairs.

The young mother said she was caught on the stairway of the building while trying to run to safety with her twins.

While under the rubble, she managed to make telephone calls to her husband who had returned from work to meet what

used to be their home in a shambles.

With her handset, she was able to tell her husband about her location. But before help came, Taiwo, one of her twins, had died.

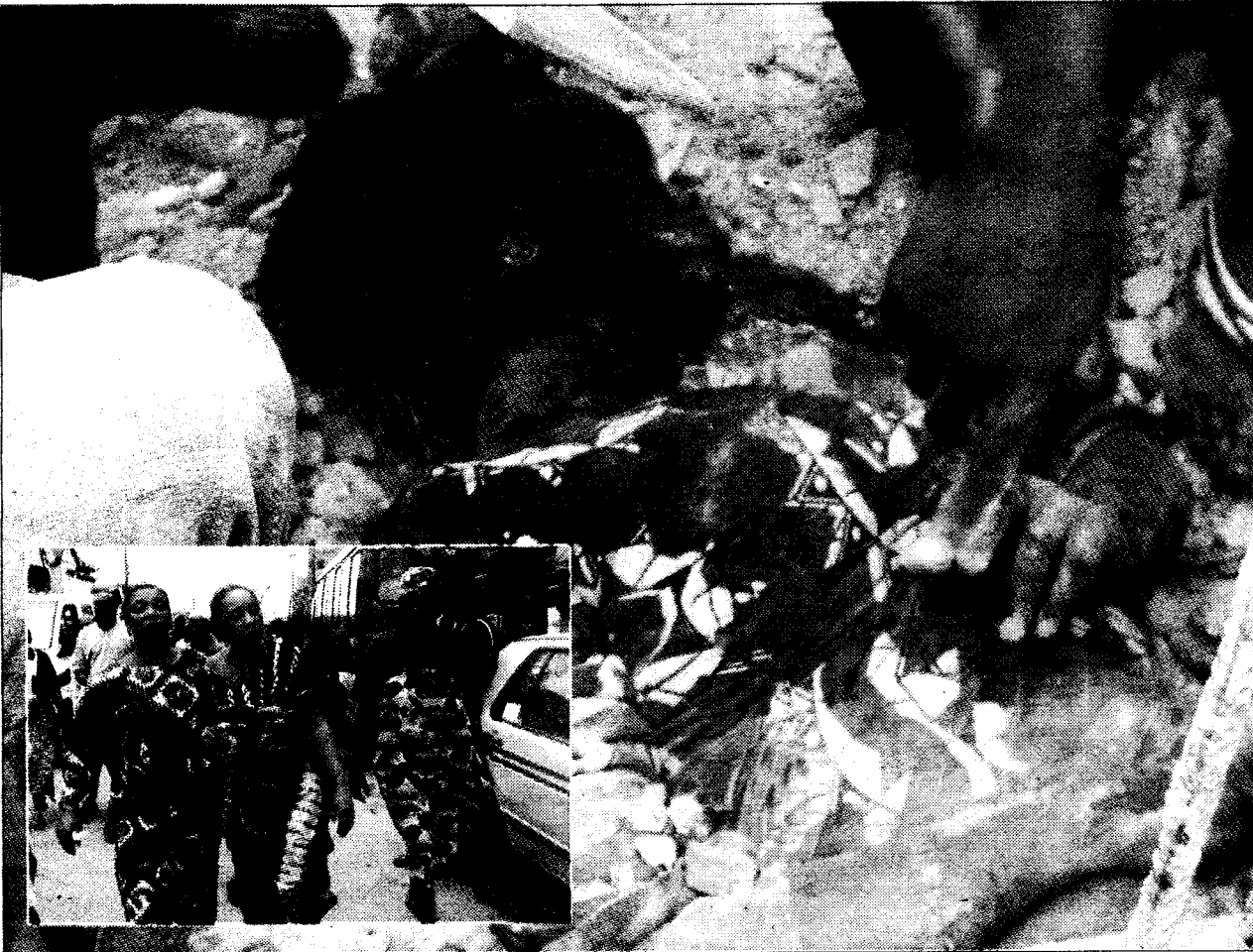
Taiwo's corpse was among the 50 pulled out of the rubble by rescue workers. Another set of twins was said to be among the dead.

About 48 others trapped were lucky as they were rescued alive.

For another occupant of the building, simply identified as Amosu, the tragedy appeared worse.

Although he survived, he lost his newly born twins

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• Tanwa, a survivor and mother of one of the dead twins being rescued after 19 hours under the rubble... on Wednesday. **Inset:** Another survivor being helped by relations. Photos: Bayo Fajana and Olalekan Adetayo.

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and their mother

Another victim was one Shamsudeen Folawiyo, who was trapped in the debris along with his wife and three children.

Folawiyo's friends told our correspondents that his remains and that of one of his children had been recovered and buried according to Islamic rites.

His wife and two other children, according to his friends, were still in the rubble as at 3.30pm on Wednesday.

Many, who were still trapped, were still speaking with their friends and relatives on the telephone as at 3.30pm when our

correspondents left the scene.

After exhausting their airtime while trying to describe the points where they were trapped, their relatives sent airtime to them via SMS.

One of such trapped victims is Miss Nkechi Okafor, a student of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, who was patronising an hairdressing salon on the ground floor of the building when the incident occurred.

Her friend, Miss Chioma Anyadike, told our correspondents amidst sobs that she accompanied Okafor to the salon on Tuesday evening.

She said, "I left her there and went back home with a promise that I will return a few minutes after to take her home but by the time I returned the building had caved in.

"I have been calling her telephone number since yesterday (Tuesday) until this morning (Wednesday). She kept telling me that where she was was very dark. But since about 30 minutes ago, the number has not been responding again."

The number was said not to be reachable when our correspondent offered to assist her dial it on his telephone.

Another survivor, Miss Celestina Agbii, said she had just finished her dinner when she heard a loud noise.

Agbii, a student of Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Afikpo-North Local Government, Ebonyi State, said, "I quickly rushed out and stood on the balcony. When I looked

down, I saw the crowd gazing up at our building.

"By the time I looked up, I saw the last floor caving in. The only thing I know again was that I jumped from the balcony. No sooner had I jumped than the building came down.

"This is God at work. I cannot recollect all the events but I will tell you the extent that I still remember."

The 28-year-old Agbii sustained bruises in her legs and is currently receiving treatment at nearby Kuba Hospital.

An official of the Red Cross, Mr. Ige Oladimeji, told our correspondents at the scene that more people were still trapped in the rubble.

Oladimeji said that those rescued had been taken to Ikeja and Gbagada General Hospitals, Bambo Hospital, Dunik Hospital, Halmat Medical Clinic, Mount Sinai Hospital as well as St. Paul and St. Stephen

Hospitals.

Ms. Umo Okon of the Red Cross also told the *Agence France Presse* that 50 people were rescued.

The Lagos State Governor, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, who arrived at the scene around 1pm on Thursday, said that the developer, Messrs. Lakuns Investment Nigeria Limited, would be prosecuted for failing to abide by the approval granted for the building.

He said that two other buildings allegedly constructed by the developer and already marked for demolition at 42 and 49 Ibadan Street, would be taken over by the government.

Tinubu warned the occupants of the two buildings to pack out before the end of this month to avert another calamity.

The Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Mr. Bolaji Abosede, said that the ministry approved only two floors for the ill-fated building.

trated - Ehindero

A visibly angry Ehindero said, "Some of the things we are experiencing now did not happen during our time (as commissioner of police). If an IG called us in the night, we would not

Okeke, said corruption was still prevalent in the Force. Besides, he said some officers sought to dodge responsibility by asking for undeserved transfer.

He promised to shortly