

## TOWN &amp; COUNTRY

By Sikiru Abdul-Raheem  
in Gusau

WHILE the Zamfara State Government is trying to come to grips with investigations and indictments by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), tragedy struck when Gusau Dam collapsed a fortnight ago. The ensuing mass of water behind the dam swept away more than 1,000 houses and homesteads, while more than 100 people lost their lives in the disaster. In the aftermath, severe hardship, hopelessness and despair became the lot of those who had lost their beloved ones apart from millions of naira worth of properties destroyed.

Victims of the disaster and residents of the state capital, as well as government officials alike continue to express opposing views about the actual causes of the flood, with many of those spoken to blamed the state government for the calamity.

It has since come to light that the Gusau Dam collapse was an avoidable disaster because it was foreseen about three months ago.

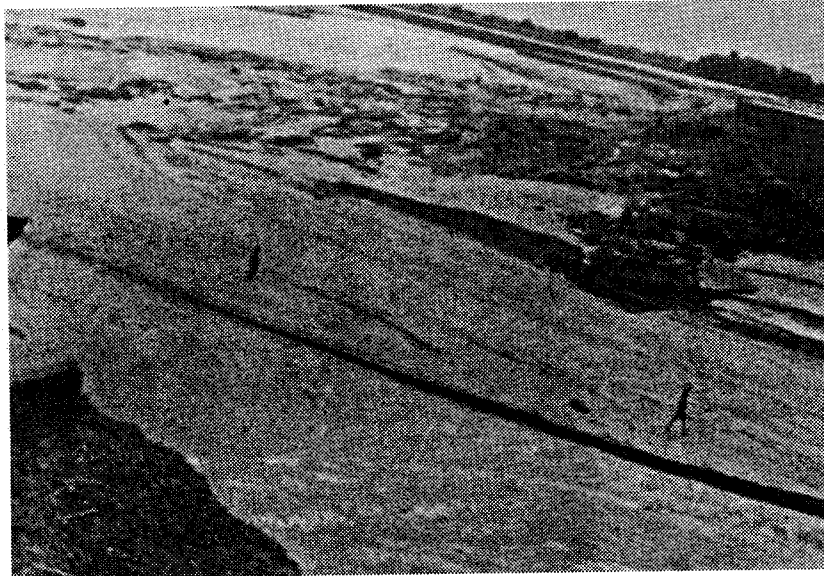
**Saturday Vanguard** investigation reveals that a contractor, Gusau and Rara Construction Company Nigeria Limited which carries out reclamation works on emergency spillway gullies along the Gusau-Magami-Dansadau Road had complained to the State Water Board that the Gusau barrage gates through which excess water is discharged into the river have remained closed. The letter dated 23rd July and made available to **Saturday Vanguard** noted that the situation is capable of generating serious flood. "As such, the excess water now floods through the spillway making it impossible to carry out any construction work inside the channel."

An Italian firm, ITALCO, which is the sole consultant to the water board was alleged not to have acted on this warning by opening the barrage gates. This lapse on the part of ITALCO is believed to be responsible for the flood as the water breached its restraints in a massive flooding since its original spillway was blocked.

**Saturday Vanguard** discovered that there has been a swelling undercurrent of public anger about the appointment of the firm by the state government as the chief supervisor of water management in Zamfara State. ITALCO's chief executive, one Mr. Renato Sala is said to be a close friend of the Zamfara governor, Alhaji Ahmad Sani since their school days. Attempts by **Saturday Vanguard**, to speak to Mr. Renato Sala or any of the ITALCO management proved abortive. Governor Ahmad Sani was reportedly attacked by an angry mob when he paid a visit to the dam site immediately after the disaster that Saturday morning.

When **Saturday Vanguard** visited one of the refugee camps set up by the state government at the Government Day Secondary School, Birnin Ruwa, the refugees were seen clustered in groups bemoaning their fate.

The visit to the camp



●Flooded spillways of the Gusau Dam



●Remains of houses swept away by the flood

## ZAMFARA'S COLLAPSED DAM:

# Contractor's ignored warning led to disaster

## ●Untold story of disaster in which 100 people died



●Governor Ahmad Sani

**The sole consultant to the water board was alleged not to have acted on this warning by opening the barrage gates. This lapse on the part of the company is believed to be responsible for the flood as the water breached its restraints in a massive flooding since its original spillway was blocked**

further revealed a grounded fear of cholera outbreak if immediate precaution is not taken by the authorities. The school premises as well as the classes are crowded. Men and women, young and old, all victims of the disaster have taken shelter in the available buildings with little space for breathing. The whole place is under a swarm of flies as faeces, litter, the

ground behind the occupied classrooms of the school. Food leftovers are also scattered all over the compound, while small children pass urine and their mothers simply pour water on the surface.

**Saturday Vanguard** further discovered that many of those staying in the camp were allegedly not the real victims but Gusau residents, who came to share part of the relief materials which they see as booty. It was discovered that when the camp was opened, residents around the camp immediately trooped

provided as the government said it was making arrangements to provide a more conducive settlement for the victims.

Danladi Ibrahim Bababiri, a 25 year-old student of Bayero University, Kano who lost all his books and other documents to the disaster and now lives with his parents in the camp appeals for urgent action to avoid another disaster.

"There is every need for the government to step in and nip a cholera outbreak in the bud. The place is heavily congested. And the people sit down to eat as flies and other insects besiege the environment. You can see the camp is becoming a dumping ground for refuse. Immediate action needs to be taken," he urged.

Investigation at the two camps revealed that the state government only donated plastic buckets and mats. Observers who considered the government response to the tragedy as inadequate complained that the 50 bags of rice made available is not capable of feeding almost four thousand displaced people.

But the Zamfara State Government is not accepting blame for the disaster. Governor Ahmed Sani dismissed the view that the flood was caused by the failure to open the dam's spillways, explaining that the large volume of water that overflowed the dam was too strong such that if the spillways were open, the whole structure would have been broken by the huge

### Copies of letters written by contractors on the dam

#### GUSAU & RARA CONSTRUCTION COMPANY NIG. LTD

HEAD OFFICE: No. 3 Sadiq Sidiq Road, Gyo Tudun Wada Central Mosque, P.O. Box 6, Gusau, Zamfara State. Tel: 023-201004

HOME ADDRESS: No. 17/40, Shikah Road, Tudun Wada, Gusau, Zamfara State. Tel: 003-200715

23rd July, 2006

The Managing Director  
S.R.R.B.D.A  
Sakoto

ATTENTION:  
Safrim Associates Int. Ltd.  
Gusau.

Sir,

**RE: EROSION MENACE CONTROL STRUCTURES  
ALONG GUSAU - MAGAMI - DANSADAU ROAD**

This is to inform you that reclamation of gully fingers on both sides of the spillway channel has reached an advance stage of completion.

However, the Gusau barrage gates which provides means of discharging excess water into the river have remained closed. As such, the excess water now flows through the spillway making it impossible to carry out any construction work inside the channel.

We complained to our consultants who wrote a letter to the water board management on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2006 (copy attached), requesting for the lifting of the barrage gate to enable us execute our work. Up till now, we have not received any reply. All efforts to meet the water board consultant (ITALCO) through the Managing Director of water board proved abortive.

Your earlier intervention will help in avoiding further delay.

Yours faithfully,  
Alh. Garba Kwaccido  
Managing Director



**SAFRIM ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL LIMITED**  
Architects, Managers & Engineering Consultants

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SAH/GUS/CE/C-1095  
June 6, 2006

The Managing Director,  
Zamfara State Water Supply Agency,  
Gusau.

Dear Sir,

**RE: EROSION MENACE CONTROL STRUCTURES  
ALONG GUSAU-MAGAMI-DANSADAU ROAD, ZAMFARA STATE**

**DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY SPILLWAY GULLIES**

Please be informed that reclamation of gullies and erosion in the vicinity of Gusau Barrage Emergency Spillway is one of the Project Components for the Construction of Erosion Menace Control Structures along Gusau-Magami-Dansadau Road, Zamfara State, awarded to M/S Gusau & Rara Construction Company Ltd. of No. 3 Sadiq Sidiq Road, Gusau.

The said Contractor has mobilized to the site for the execution of required works as designed by the Consultant, M/S Safrim Associates Int. Ltd.

As the rainy season is ongoing, drainage through the main gully downstream of emergency spillway may likely interrupt the works progress in the event of high flood and closure of Barrage gate due to storm-water flow through the gully.

In order to enable the Contractor to continue his construction activities, your cooperation and coordination is solicited for re-opening and opening of gates in such a way that the collector drains on the upstream side of culvert does not get overtopped so that water drainages through emergency spillway be avoided or at least minimized to a minimum flow.

Also settlement of embankment shoulder and slope in the vicinity of emergency spillway is observed which may likely damage the road seriously if not controlled and made good in time. As rehabilitation of Dam Sidiq road is not included in the optional project, the matter is reported only for the corrective measures by the concerned party.

This is for your information and necessary action, please.

Yours faithfully,  
For: Safrim Associates Int. Ltd.

YONGE M. AHMED  
Project Director

mass of water. In his own reaction, state Head of Service and chairman of the Emergency Relief Committee set up by the Zamfara State Government, Alhaji Muhammed Bello Umar maintained that the collapse of the dam is not the fault of

anybody as it remains a natural tragedy.

"It's natural - nobody knew there would be a down pour that will fill the river so much like that. It has been a rule that whenever there is too