

Vanguard



TRANSLATE:::

'Our killer-flood story'

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*Sleeping 7-yr-old dead; 3 siblings miraculously escape

*FG to the rescue

By Favour Nnabugwu

When houses are built on the waterway, they tend to replace the natural surfaces that store rainwater with hard, impervious surfaces thereby diverting water and pollution away from the creeks or sewers. As a result, community growth can lead to higher levels of contaminated runoff, impaired water channels, degraded wildlife habitat thus causing uncontrolled sewage overflows.

Disaster knocks on the door of over 100 houses with more than 300 people in Anguwar Yelwa community in Chikun local government area of Kaduna State presently sitting on life-threatening flooding and landslides as floodwaters rush through communities and homes.

File photo: An aerial view of submerged community in the Niger Delta



(<http://dvsl3w2q45hb8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Flood-rivers2.jpg>)

File photo: An aerial view of submerged community

Hundreds of Anguwar Yelwa residents are living in settlements that can wipe off generations if the Federal Governments do not act promptly to divert the water or have the residents relocated.

The Kaduna community recently experienced life-threatening floods when a 15-hour rain started at about 11pm after many of the residents had gone to bed. The rain started on a Wednesday with intermittent breaks, became heavier on Thursday and started wreaking havoc when the water forced its way through, on Friday, by collapsing a three-cell culvert, in

the process, blocking the channel that allows for easy flow of water between Anguwar Barde and Yelwa communities.

The ensuing flood resulted in the death of a seven-year-old girl, Theresa James, in Yelwa who drowned.

A resident, who is also a member of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria in the community, Joshua Gonoh, said, while narrating the incident, they witnessed same flooding last year due to the poor drainage in the area.

“In this part of the state, there are no proper drainages where water can flow freely. The water that caused the flood flows in a particular drainage which comes from an area called Halima. All the water from the area flows into the same drainage and comes out from the opening created under the bridge that collapsed due to erosion. So, when the hole blocked, there was no place for the water to pass and it had to go into the community, causing massive flooding,” Gonoh explained.

“Even the main Television Road connects to that same drainage that collapsed. The water level was up to the waist of grown men who tried to salvage the property of residents in the area. A church had to be pulled down in order to pave way for water to pass so that it does not flood the community because, last year, the same area was flooded due to inadequate drainages and this has become a common occurrence. Most of the houses located near the collapsed bridge are flooded during rainy season.”

Gonoh blamed residents for not helping themselves by finding a place to dump their refuse instead of doing so in the drainage system: “If the drainage was clear from refuse, the flood would not have reached that magnitude.”

One Mr Solomon Daye, a resident of the area, recalled that they had retired for the night when the rain started only to wake up to find their homes flooded.

He explained that one of his neighbours had left her four children and gone for a night vigil. Three of them were sleeping on the bed while one was sleeping on the floor. When the flood came, the three who slept on the bed were overwhelmed while the one on the floor could not escape. All drowned in the flood.

“We were asleep at about 12.30am when we discovered water was coming into our house,” Daye said.

“Before I could jump up, the whole house was flooded. In a twinkle of an eye, it got to my shoulder; we just struggled and had to find our way into the ceiling crying for help.

In the morning when the rain subsided, my neighbour who went to a night vigil and left her four children at home, three of the children slept on the bed while the other one slept on the floor and since they are little children, they could not escape the flood.

“So, when the flood came the three children on the bed were raised up but, Theresa James, seven, died as she could not escape.

“When concerned residents arrived to rescue the children, they didn’t even know there were four of them in the house; it was when the water has subsided and they went in to arrange the room that the body of Theresa was found.

“When concerned residents arrived to rescue the children, they didn’t even know there were four of them in the house, it was after the rain subsided and they went to arrange the room that they found the body of Theresa.”

Many of the residents wanted compensation. A few wanted solution. Everybody wanted answers. How had a system, designed to counter exactly the type of heavy weather conditions that hit the east-north of the state, failed so utterly?

And beyond that lies the core question of whether the land the communities stand on is a known flood plain that shouldn’t have been developed at all.

Another resident, Apostle George Omeha, claimed the flood arose from persistence rainfall that caused the small channel

to expand so badly.

“It was a very small water passing through here. If you look at the tunnel there, it is a very small one. As the rain kept on falling, it kept on eroding it and it got to the current stage”, Omeha said.

“When they built this bridge (referring to the three-cell culvert), it would have been a very big bridge but it was a very small bridge; that is why they put that very tunnel. And when this thing happened and there was an overflow, they came and created another way. They created this waterway of recent.”

The residents fail to admit that they are in low land, hence the Federal Government road, high above their houses, is like any other road rather than a bridge.

The Managing Director of FERMA, Gabriel Amuchi, who led engineers to inspect the situation, said the agency was taking the project seriously and will act promptly.

Amuchi explained that the effect of downpour and flood caused the extension of the culvert to cave in. He, therefore, assured that FERMA will reconstruct the culvert and channel the water properly to avoid a recurrence.

He said that a low land is not a safe place to build on, and to avert loss of lives, the road agency boss is of the opinion that it is better to relocate residents of that area.

“FERMA will, in collaboration with the state government, find enduring solution to the flooding and render the low land location free of occupation”, the MD said.

The community claimed that the flood was as a result of the collapse of a bridge but Amuchi said there has never been a bridge there but a three-cell culvert. “There was no bridge collapse here, it was a culvert, a three cell culvert. And the collapse of the three cell culvert was not evident until it totally caved in.

“And now that it has reflected on the shoulder, the carriage way is still functional; we are intervening at the appropriate time. And we are assuring that in no distant time, the repair will be done”.

He said the agency had discussed with Kaduna State government to find a durable design and how best the state can free the area of occupants.