



Badagry collapse: Owners converted old bungalow to storey building — Neighbours

● As survivors narrate experience

By Esther Onyegbula

THE one-storey building at Sunny Filled, Flour Mills, Estate, Magbon, Badagry, Lagos that collapsed, killing four persons and injuring five others on Wednesday, Vanguard gathered, was an old bungalow, before the owner decided to raise it to a storey building.

This came as one of the survivors narrated that he was eating when the building caved in.

When Vanguard got to the scene of the collapsed building, yesterday, it was discovered that the land where the construction was ongoing is a swampy area.

Also the rubbles of the building indicate that the building was an old bungalow converted to a storey building. And the reinforcements used were both old and new. Most of the iron rods used were 10mm instead of 16mm.

Speaking to Vanguard at the scene, Olape Rahmon, an official of the Lagos State Material Testing Laboratory Monitoring and Enforcement, said: "We are here to pick samples from the building to enable us carry out further investigation to confirm those primary causes, in terms of materials, to find out what was responsible for the collapse. The test will confirm if it was caused by inferior materials and other related issues."

However, neighbours confirmed that the collapsed building was formally an old bungalow before it was converted to a storey building.

Rahmon added: "It was on this bungalow that the extra floor was added, technically that is absolutely wrong because the foundation for the bungalow couldn't have carried extra load. So that is like sinking and compressing the existing building."

"So far from our preliminary site investigation, we haven't taken some of the samples to the laboratory, we can see that from the rubbles of the steel used, we haven't seen 16mm, we have only seen 10mm and 12mm."

An official of Lagos State government, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said: "I received the news of the building collapse, at 2pm, on Wednesday. I rushed to the site because I reside here, the police and other rescue operatives were already here. The people doing road construction at the expressway used their excavator to rescue those under the rubbles."

"They actually rescued nine because the 10th person was outside the building but he sustained minor injuries. Four of the construction workers died, who were actually plastering the decking of the building when it collapsed, they brought them out."

"We took those who were still alive and some who were unconscious to the hospital. The other four people died

before the excavator could rescue them."

Survivors recount experience

When Vanguard got to Eucharistic Heart of Jesus Hospital, where the survivors were receiving treatment, their relatives were hostile to newsmen over alleged media publication of the incident.

A middle aged man, who spoke as their representative, said they would only speak to newsmen when the LCDA chairman of Olorunda comes to the hospital.

However, when Vanguard finally had access to the survivors, two of them, who were in the same ward refused to talk, while two others, Alhaji Abdul and Ifeanyi recounted how they narrowly escaped death.

Alhaji Abdul, said: "We were inside the building. I was eating when the building came down. I am unhappy with the fake reports making rounds on social media and the mainstream media, they said they took us to Badagry General Hospital while we are still here."

Complaining bitterly, Abdul said: "The pictures of the building that were published are not the building that collapsed. How would they publish pictures without visiting the scene or verify the information?"

Victim narrates 29-day ordeal with kidnappers in Niger

A victim of kidnap from Bessa in Shiron Local Government Area of Niger State, Mr Rufai Galadima, yesterday, related the agonising 29 days he spent with kidnappers.

Galadima, a final year HND student of Regional Planning at Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru, told NAN in Shiron, Niger State, that the experience was harrowing.

He said: "I was kidnapped from my village, Bessa, in Shiron Local Government Area of Niger State while resting in my family house between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. by two heavily armed men on October 17, 2021."

"I was kidnapped with my younger brother's wife but when I pleaded with them that the woman was pregnant and sick they let her go."

He added that when he was abducted, the suspects demanded money and mobile phones.

He said: "I told them that I am a student and had nothing; when they asked to see other members of the family I told them that they went out."

"They said since we did not have money they would take me to their camp in the forest. When we got to their forest camp in Gwanda, Chukuba area of Shiron, they tied me to a tree and beat



Debris of the collapsed building.

"I don't have anything to say because the people who died worked with me. Usually, when we get construction jobs, we travel together even to the East."

"Yesterday (Wednesday), the police took me to the station with the injury on my head. I was bleeding profusely because of the injury on my head. Nobody builds a house to collapse and killing people. But when things like these happen, people will be saying all sorts."

On his part, Mr Ifeanyi, a 35-year-old indigene of Enugu State, said: "I was inside the building working when it collapsed. That was the first time I am working with them (other workers). It was Alhaji Abdul that called me to do the work. I am a bricklayer. I am from Enugu State. I am not married. When it happened, we were nine persons inside the building, including Abdul's brother."

Vanguard learned that the survivors were supposed to have gone to Badagry General Hospital for their x-ray and scan but were waiting for the LCDA chairman to arrive before they would be transferred to the hospital.

me to force my family to bring money."

The victim said before they got to the forest camp, the suspects stole two fowls from a family compound, which they used to prepare their meal at the camp.

"Many of the bandits in the camp ate the food and left me to stay hungry throughout the first night," he said.

He added that in the camp, there were more than 20 young girls that the suspects used as sex slaves.

"They did not allow the girls to go anywhere, the ladies only cooked for them and had intimacy with them."

"I also noticed that the ladies were not allowed to have their baths, even when they were menstruating," he said.

Galadima said the kidnapped victims in the forest camp were fed twice per day with yam stolen by the suspects from farms near the forest.

He said at the camp, the suspects possessed AK-47 rifles, AK-49 rifles,

pump action guns, rocket-propelled guns, machetes and machine guns among other weapons.

"They even boasted of shooting down a helicopter sometime in Shiron. They told me that they got their weapons from Cameroon, Niger Republic, Sokoto and Zamfara states," he said.

Galadima said the suspects used camels in transporting their weapons to Shiron from where they operated.

He also told NAN that the bandits recruited youths in the forest to join the nefarious activities on daily basis.

He said that when the kidnappers made contact with his family they initially demanded N5 million ransom and the family pleaded with them to accept N200,000 or N300,000, but they refused.

"When my family later sold our property and raised N1.3 million, the negotiation continued, before they accepted it and freed me at 9 a.m. on November 14," he said.

Court remands man for allegedly defiling 14-year-old girl

A N Ikeja Chief Magistrates' Court in Lagos State, yesterday, ordered the remand of a 30-year-old man, Saheed Safuraimi, in prison custody

for allegedly defiling a 14-year-old girl. The police arraigned Safuraimi, whose address was not given, on a two-count charge of sexual assault and