

Trademore Megacity Estate flood crisis: Matters Arising

By Kunle Daramola

It is the truth yet to be generally acknowledged that since the senseless demolition of houses in the Trademore Megacity Estate in the Lugbe area of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja started in 2014, no one has bothered or taken time to courageously clarify issues on the dastardly act as Prof Ozekhome SAN did in his recent letter to the Permanent Secretary, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. His expose unraveled, amongst others, the fact that most of all the insinuations or narratives about the flood crisis are biased and tainted with falsehoods, half-truths and misinformation. Otherwise, how can it be explained that what was supposed to be Lugbe Flood Crisis was dressed up and labelled Trademore Flood Disaster?

Surprisingly and just the following day the latest flood crisis was reported or celebrated in the media by prophets of doom, so-to-say, the authoritative "Arise Tv Nigeria" came on air with the story of the construction of a high-rise building going on side by side with the flooding still ravaging the estate, and the residents in deep agony and not even in any position to mitigate the crisis. Come to think of it, since the

homeowners took possession and moved into their houses in 2007, there is nowhere in the design or construction of the buildings, a high-rise building is sited or located other than the three and four-bedroom bungalows that adorn the estate to date. Who then is behind the malicious propaganda or vicious campaign to get the homeowners punished or deprived of their hard-earned houses? Before then, the public knowledge of the flood crisis attracted lazy comments from the uninformed and perhaps, voodoo critics. Armchair commentators rushed to submit that the houses were built on flood channels, and the one that made the most unfortunate headline came from a professional that was supposed to know better if he had applied knowledge and diligence properly. He likened the flood crisis to a "yearly water festival" and the FCT Administration (FCTA) hurriedly declared the Trademore Megacity Estate a disaster zone.

One may then ask, what informed the hatred, and the deliberate acts, and who was behind or wanted to make things difficult for the residents of the Estate, their lives snuffed out of them by unnecessarily destroying their hard-earned houses or is it not a case



of the proverbial saying of giving the dog a bad name to hang her? We are told that flooding is caused by natural and human factors. Usually, the natural factors are in the form of heavy or torrential rains, ocean storms and tidal waves along the coasts. These are all true but do not apply in the case of Trademore Megacity Estate where the developers have proved beyond reasonable doubt that human activities are the causative factors and not building on flood plains as members of the public are being persuaded to believe. The Trademore Megacity Estate took off in 2007 after the homeowners had completed payment and taken possession of their houses. It is on record that from 2007, the Estate never experienced flooding until eight years; indeed in 2014 when Globek, Arco, River Park, Jado, and other new estates started springing up in the Lugbe environment. Upon investigation, the developers discovered that the flood channels passing through the surrounding estates had been sand filled for construction and the flood water diverted into the Trademore Megacity Estate. Also, a dam at Aleita, an adjoining settlement, which usually collects flood from Pyakasa, Kuara, Dakwo, Duboyi, Gaduwa, etc., and which serves as a buffer to the flowing flood had been erased due to the sand filling and illegal land reclamation activities outside the Estate. Again, the massive reclamation of the land outside the Estate culminated in a narrowing of the width of the water outlet after the estate and especially behind Clobek estate, Wisdom estate etc. That distorted and disrupted the lateral flow of water and made flood to flow back into the Estate whenever there is a heavy downpour.

Given the foregoing, in 2004, the developers presented the ugly situation-but-findings to the FCTA through the Department of Development Control, making clear the causes of the flooding and calling for urgent and its kind intervention. In response, the Department of Development Control directed the developers to expand, dredge, and desilt the flood channels within the estate which they happily executed under FCDA's supervision. Suffice it to say that the Trademore Megacity Estate witnessed two other flooding cases between 2015 and 2019 and the situation compelled the developers to privately commission a detailed investigation to find out the perennial causes of the flood and proffer solutions. The document produced was captioned, "2020 Developer's Investigation to The Recent Flooding of Trademore Megacity Estate And Surroundings" and was presented to the FCTA for their information and necessary action. Upon receipt of the document, the FCTA permitted the developers to expand the two-cell culvert in the estate to a three-cell type and that was speedily carried out. They also urged them to expand and dredge the canal before and after the culvert. Surprisingly, as the developers were executing the later, the Development Control rolled in machines and demolished 35 units of houses in the estate, claiming that the houses stood on the flood

channels. As the demolition of houses in the estate turned into a ritual of some sort to the Department of Development Control, they again visited the estate in 2022 and marked over 60 units of houses for demolition without paying attention to the practical solutions put together and presented to them by the developers. It is worrisome that, as rumour have it, another 116 units of houses are in line for demolition as a result of the latest flood crisis.

What is the Department of Development Control up to in the matters of the future of the houses of the residents of Trademore Megacity Estate in Lugbe, and do they have a hidden agenda as the residents of the estate are speculating? One of them who pleads anonymity said recently, "The allegations of building on flood channels, demolition of our houses and the FCTA sitting on the fence each time there is flooding in the estate are symptomatic of a hidden agenda to take our lands and reallocate them to themselves." It is very worrisome that since the advent of the Estate's flooding tragedy in 2014 occasioned by deliberate human vagaries or activities, the Department of Development Control cannot be linked with any tangible or credible role in tackling the flood menace. In the matters of the Trademore Megacity Estate, Lugbe, the only language the Department of Development Control speaks and understands is demolition and demolition, and at the last appraisal, 50 units of houses were demolished. The developers have done their best supporting the homeowners and residents, fighting tirelessly with every energy at their behest each time there is flooding and practically, they commissioned an independent body to unravel the causes and solutions to the flood menace, culminating in the production of a working document that the FCTA has not implemented or acted upon. The recent intervention of Senator Irete Kingibe, representing the Federal capital Territory in the red Chamber, will definitely be seen by both the vulnerable residents and the beleaguered developers as a most timely and reassuring development. It is hoped that this amazon of a lady will not allow herself to be hoodwinked by anyone but rather painstakingly scrutinize the welter of documents that decisively prove that pulling down structures in Trademore Megacity Estate without an honest and compassionate understanding of the problem will amount to not only a miscarriage of justice but also a futile exercise in shadow-chasing. To that extent, we call on her to prevail on the FCTA to urgently halt the senseless demolition of houses in the Trademore Megacity Estate, Lugbe, and immediately implement the long-awaited and professionally produced document of findings put together by the developers, to arrest further flooding of the estate. Anything short of that is a ruse and means the FCTA is unserious and has a hidden agenda.

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