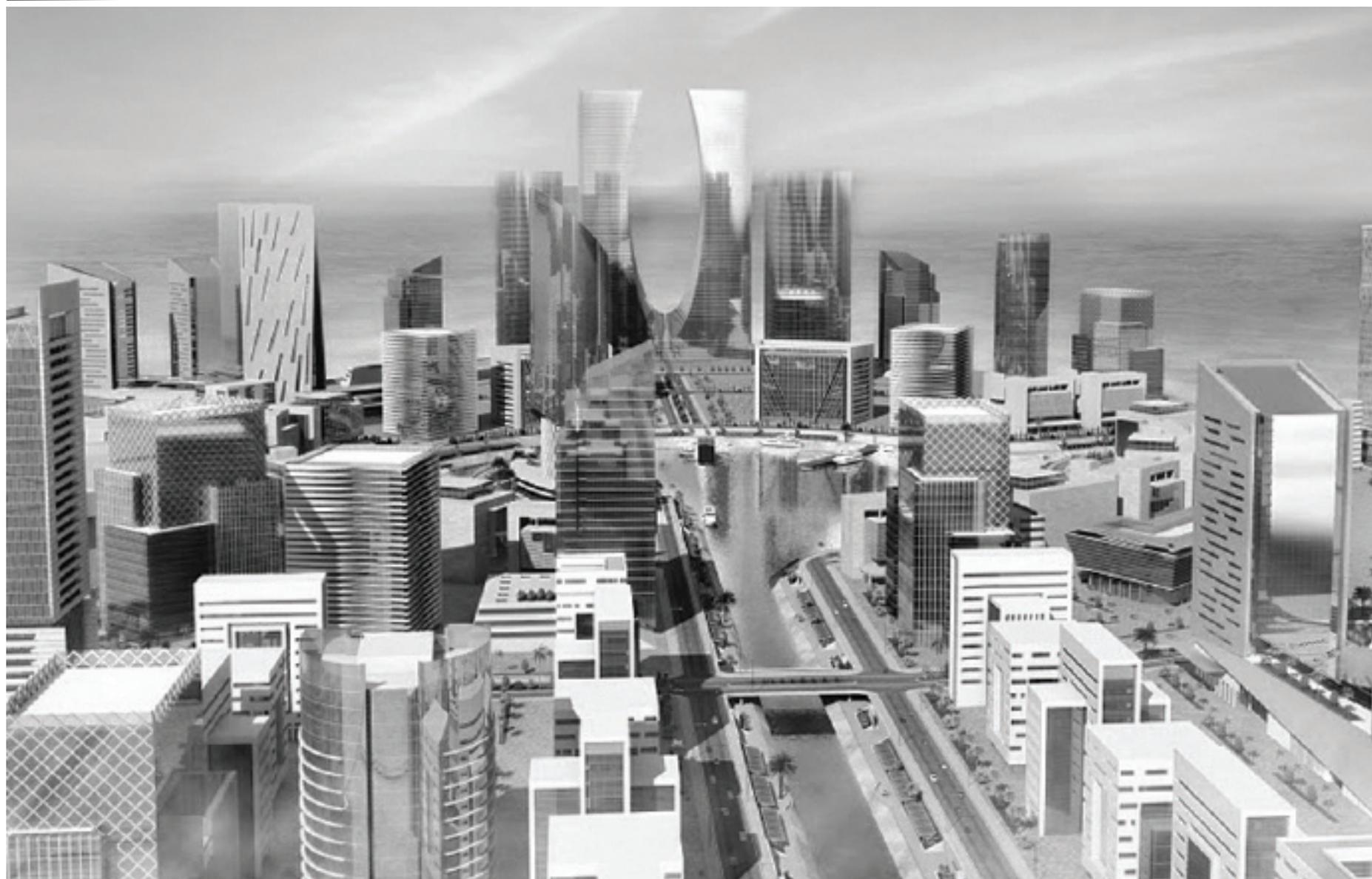


# SPECIAL FEATURE



## EKO ATLANTIC CITY PROJECT:

# In Whose Interest?

### The Project

EKO Atlantic City, touted severally as a “city rising from the sea” is a proposed city which will sit on 1000 hectares of land reclaimed from the Atlantic sea. Once completed, it will be a self-sufficient city with waterfront area, tree-line streets, efficient transport system, helipads, hotels, residents and boulevard. It will be a development with mixed used plots that will combine residential areas, leisure facilities, offices and shops. It is divided into 6 phases, the first five of which are available for commercial and residential development, while the sixth will be used as a hub for utility service, such as sewage treatment plants, water supply and solid waste management. According to its developer, the city will help among other things decongest areas of Lagos; build on Lagos reputation as a “land of aquatic splendor; serve as tourist attraction; provide job opportunities as thousands of people will participate in the construction of the city and serve as headquarters for oil companies. It will also serve as resident for 250,000 inhabitants; work place for 150,000 workforce and see 250,000 persons commute on a daily basis. As a self-sufficient city, it will generate its own power and fulfill its ICT needs because it will have installed extensive fibre optics equipment, all of these underground.

### Uniqueness of the project

**The Eko Atlantic City project attracted huge debate as experts argued on it's take off that it is not a popular idea and exclusively meant for the rich. Our reporter FRANCIS OGBONNA took on all sides as he spoke to the Commissioner for Waterfront infrastructure development Hon. Oniru, project developer South Energyx Nig. Ltd. and a human right advocate, Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri.**

It is not entirely a new concept. Before now, several cities have been constructed on reclaimed lands, some out of necessity, others purely out of man's insatiable desire to conquer nature. Modern reclamation work first began with Hong Kong's “Praya Reclamation” scheme which added 50 to 60 acres of land in 1890. It was one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken during the colonial Honk Kong era. Since then, Honk Kong Disney resort, Hong Kong international Airport and its predecessor Kai Tak Airport, have all been built on reclaimed lands.

Other modern examples include Helsinki, Finland, Mexico City; Foreshore of Cape town; Chicago Shoreline; Hassan II mosque, Beirut; Central District, Lebanon more elaborate experience is the Dubai story. In July

2013, Sri Lanka signed a deal to build a \$1.4 billion port city with Chinese Communication Construction Company which will invest \$ 1.43 billion to build this port city. In Nigeria, the first ambitious project of similar nature, although not close in magnitude was the Banana Island project.

### Layout and Protection Plan

This proposed city will have the main reclaimed area, being 7.5km long, with a width of 2.3 km on the western end, tapering to 0.5km on the eastern end. Eko Atlantic when completed will be 1 and half times the size of Victoria Island. Beginning from the shores of Bar beach. The boundaries will terminate just before Goshen estate in Lekki. The outer edge of the reclaimed land will be protected from the sea by approximately

8km long rock revetment to provide shoreline protection to the new land and to Victoria Island. According to Prince Adesegun Oniru, the Honorable Commissioner for Waterfront Infrastructure Development, Lagos State, “The great city wall of Lagos or sea wall will withstand the worst Atlantic storm that could be expected in over 100 years”.

### Project Update

The reclamation work on the Bar Beach which began in 2008, currently have over a total of 5,000,000 sq. meters or 500 hectares of land area already reclaimed and dedicated by President Goodluck Jonathan. To achieve this, the contractors have pumped about 400,000 tonnes of sand on a daily basis reclaimed from marine shelf mixed with granites gotten from neighboring city of Abeokuta and ferried by about 90 trucks ,almost all of the plots meant for allocation have been acquired.

### Lagos State Interest

Until the promoters were contacted, the question of actual ownership of the EAC project has been unclear. Information available on

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different platforms varied. To some the project was solely a pet project of a particular political Godfather of Yoruba extraction, while to some others; it was a joint venture between Lagos State Government and SENL. Another set of opponents believed it was a LASG's project and that they just chose to front SENL. One of such opponents, Professor Aradeon (an arch-educator in the chair of Build with Earth, an NGO) had said "EACP is a private gated city firmly grounded on the exploitation and expropriation and use of our common wealth for private profit".

Responding swiftly to that, David Frame, the MD of South Energyx Engineering limited debunked these claims saying it was a strategic partnership with LASG, a concession which gives exclusive authority over development of the CITY to SENL. In his words "SENL has a concession Agreement with LASG and the duration is 78 years. The funding is through a consortium of local and international banks and also incomes from sales." Confirming this also the Prince Oniru, said "EAC is owned by SENL. They are the soul-owners of that project called Eko Atlantic City; the role that the LASG is playing in this project is clearly a supervision role."

However, this does not mean that LASG has nothing to gain from this project. On the contrary, the representative of LASG has without mincing words acknowledged that they have a lot to gain from the execution, financially and otherwise. Chief among these gains is the permanent solution provided to the incessant ocean surge that easily beset Victoria Island and its environs. According to Oniru "this project is the life-saver of Victoria Island".

Financially, apart from the fee usually paid for approval of construction, part of the agreement signed with SENL will see LASG get from every land allotted, 5% the value and another 5% as consent fees. This is not to mention the monies accruable as Land use tax on each building constructed and other applicable taxes. As relayed by Oniru, "EAC falls within the territory of Lagos and like every other part of the state, would not be granted any concession" when asked about the possibility of the city enjoying any form of tax waiver.

Other benefits include the city conferring on Lagos the title of being among the prestigious list of cities built on water and will help among other things decongest certain areas of Lagos.

**Opposition and Defense**  
Opponents of these projects have raised certain objects. These groups of organized individuals and institutions ranging from experts, including Environmentalist; Marine Engineers; Legal Practitioners to Human rights activists and international NGOs have stated 3 main arguments viz. the promoters' defiance of Conventions; insensitivity to possible negative impact on



the neighboring communities and were pursuing a purely elitist project.

In August 2012, representatives of Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Nigeria; Environmental Law Research institutes and Community Conservation and Development initiatives had jointly presented a report and in it, alleged that LASG had violated the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act 2004 by submitting Eko Atlantic EIA reports 3 years after the commencement of dredging activities (The EIA Act 2004, provides that an EIA must first be carried out before embarking on any development project). In their words "LASG submitted on the report of the EIA on November 2011, approval from Federal Ministry of Environment came January 2013, while reclamation started in 2008". Secondly, the Final draft of the EIA submitted was for Phase 1-Dredging stage and so did not cover construction phase, however piling work for construction of the first building has started.

In defense, David Frame had suggested that their action was necessitated by an urgent need to salvage a dire situation. "The rapid erosion of the coastline of Lagos is well documented. Along Bar Beach, Victoria Island in particular, the situation was threatening the very existence of low lying Victoria Island with the collapse of the Coastal road, Ahmadu Bello way in 2005/2006. Emergency action was instigated by Lagos Government (LASG) to avert a pending disaster. Subsequently violent storms could have devastated Victoria Island had the protection not been installed. LASG later publicly justified their course of action" he had said. Oniru on the other hand asserted that "nothing (no part of the process) was fast-tracked. A number of Environmental Impact assessments were

done by Royal Dutch Company, Royal Haskoning together with the Federal Ministry of Environment. It is a continuous assessment, as the project progresses more assessments would be done".

As it concerns transparency, these opponents have opined in several fora that public engagement was not part of LASG and SENL plans. They had claimed that the several public hearings held by the promoters were not widely publicized and when held, the demographics of the participants did not reflect the requisite stakeholders. Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri, Executive Director of Spaces for Change, an NGO in the forefront of the fight for

Community participation had said about one of such public hearings she attended, that "99% of the participants were government officials, and hand-picked specifically for that purpose".

Frame discredited this statement saying it was "...completely incorrect. In fact the level of public attendance was considerably greater." Concerning the media used, he said "the event was publicized by direct engagement with identified stakeholders in the press and local radio as instructed by the FME".

Last but not least, a lot of people have wondered how much a plot of land cost in the new peninsula. Frame

had been quoted on one occasion as saying plots close to the city water front would cost \$ 2000 (N320,000), while inner city cost \$ 1,000 (160,000) per square meters. If we were to go by the fact that David Frame had on another occasion divulged that an average plot in the City would not be measured by the normal standard which is 1000 square meters, but 2500 to 3000 square meters, then an average plot on EAC will go for between \$ 5,000,000 and \$ 6,000,000 (N800,000,000 and N960,000,000 respectively at N160 to a Dollar) for waterfront plots and \$ 2,500,000 and \$ 3,000,000 (N400,000,000 and N480,000,000

correspondingly at N160 per Dollar) for inner city plots.

This has been interpreted as being ridiculously high. In her words, Ibezim-Ohaeri had described it as being "Blazingly expensive...and 5 times more expensive than Ikoyi. Your wealth has to be higher than normal for you to be able to afford one (a plot)".

The promoters on the other hand are unapologetic about it, saying it was competitive compared to other areas in Lagos of like demographics. According to Frame, "...given the enhanced facilities available in EAC, these rates represent good value...All countries with a thriving economy have a

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## Why We Gave Concession For 78 years - Prince Oniru

Lagos State Commissioner for Waterfront Infrastructure Development, Hon. Adesegun Oniru in this interview with our reporter, FRANCIS OGBONNA discloses the agreement between South Energyx Nigeria Limited and why the project is viable. Excerpt...

### Project Ownership

EKO Atlantic City (EAC) is owned by a developer called South Energyx Nigerian Limited (SENL). They are the sole owners of the project called EAC. The role the Lagos State Government (LASG) is playing in this project is purely a supervision role. SENL was given a 78 years certificate of occupancy. EAC came into play due to the regular erosion we use to have in Bar Beach, which is now a thing of the past. LASG, spent money to put in place a permanent solution then in 2006/2007 to protect Victoria Island from flooding and regular ocean surge from the Atlantic Ocean and the next phase after putting that solution there is to reclaim back that which was lost to

the Atlantic Ocean and that is purely what Eko Atlantic City project is all about. To reclaim back what we have lost as land to the Atlantic Ocean and to develop it so as to decongest Victoria Island. You can call it that (a child of circumstance), but I chose to describe it as the life-saver of Victoria Island.

Protection of Communities not provided for by the EAC

### great wall

The Eko Atlantic City (Great wall) takes care of about 7.5 km beginning from Bar Beach to just before it gets to Goshen Estate, but like every responsible Government, you can't leave everywhere else exposed, because you see what happens when there is a strong wind or strong surge. So work is ongoing now and is being handled by a contractor, Hi-tech.

### About other Waterfronts in Lagos

There are lots of developments schemes ongoing simultaneously across the various waterfronts in the state; however the state government needs to channel its energy to areas where lands seem to be more viable.

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### On Federal Government Intervention

A couple of years ago, a major disaster took place at Alpha Beach; a lot of communities were wiped out. It was so devastating that President Goodluck Jonathan came to Lagos. We took him around on a tour of the area and he promised to do something for Lagos from the Ecological fund, and any other help that the Federal Government can offer. Well as for now, Lagos has not been given anything from the Ecological fund; maybe we may get it tomorrow.

### About a possible Land Use Tax waiver

The City (EAC) we are talking about is located in a state called Lagos. There are rules and regulations that you must abide by if you must live here, because that city is part of Lagos

state, nothing would change. There is no concession whatsoever. For example, if you have to construct on Eko Atlantic City, you are still going to seek for approval like every other person and you have to pay for approval. The only difference is that the developer collects these funds on behalf of Government and remits them. That is what we agreed at. There are other ways that the state government generates revenue from that city just like anywhere else in Lagos. LASG gets from every land allotted, 5% the value and another 5% as consent fees.

### On Cost of plot

Well I don't know where you get your figures from. The only people that can say the exact cost of allocated land is SENL, the developer, because it is their land and they are the ones spending the money to reclaim that land. So if you want to know the exact price, you need to talk to SENL.

### Defiance of

### Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act

That is completely wrong. For a project like that spanning 10 million square meters, you don't just do only one EIA. Nothing was fast-tracked. Royal Haskoning did the EIA in conjunction with Lagos Ministry of Waterfront Infrastructure Development, Lagos Ministry of Environment and Federal Ministry of Environment. Different town-meetings went on; I was Chairman of those town meetings. The last one was done about three months ago in ocean view. The results were all submitted to the Federal Ministry of Environment, who looked at it critically and raised issues where necessary. Of course, if they had seen anything that would have been adverse to the environment, they wouldn't have shut their eyes to it. They would have pointed it out and told us to go and correct it.



•Prince Oniru

# It's Not A Popular Idea – Ibezim-Ohaeri

**Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri, is the Executive Director, Spaces for Change. Basically her job is to infuse human rights into social and economic governance processes in Nigeria. She Speaks On the Eko Atlantic City Project revealing that it is a project that will further widen the gap between the rich and the poor and as such is anti-people. Excerpt...**

### Can we meet you?

My name is Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri. I am the Executive Director, Spaces for Change, we are into advocating. Basically we use the human rights

framework and youth-centered strategies to mobilize for the inclusion of certain often unheard section of the populace particularly as it affects social and economic governance and decision-making process.

### Who are these unheard persons?

They include, but are not limited to the marginalized few who live in remote communities, the youth population, and some vulnerable group whose voices

are not often sought for or requested for. I will give you an example, if you are familiar with some development projects in Lagos; you see a lot of impact is made in elitist zones. The roads leading to these elitist zones are usually tarred, dual carriage. You find pedestrian walks, but if you move to places like Alimosoho or Okokomaiko, you will wonder if those places are in Lagos. There are actually many slums scattered around Lagos. The opinion of these people is usually not important, except during elections. So our work reaches to those traditionally neglected people.

### So by implication, you are saying the whole developmental processes in Lagos are concentrated in some areas?

Yes it is too obvious. If I were to borrow the words of Patrick Obahiagbon "it is visible to the blind and audible to the deaf". It is so easy to detect that there is a concentration of infrastructures in urban areas. Urban in the sense that, they are really just located around the Central Business Districts (CBDs). Areas that is visible to visitors-people who don't leave in the state. Areas that if somebody comes in from London and lands at the airport, the person is likely to drive through e.g. the road that leads to Sheraton Hotel. So those areas have been

decorated for this people to see, but if you move beyond that point and move into the inner-city or even inside the GRA, you will find out that those areas are just on their own. Lagos is the only place where communities are now paving their own road. Now communities in Lagos provide infrastructure for themselves. For example, when I use to live in Isheri-Magodo estate, we contributed money to fix street lights, tar the roads and provide money for all kind of services. So if a non-resident uses the road, they will have to pay a toll. But it is not their duty to provide infrastructure for themselves. It is the duty of the Government. All these tell you where their priorities lie, when it comes to development.

### Does this apply also to the Eko Atlantic City project?

The Eko Atlantic City project is a purely an elitist project. It is a project that is designed not just for the rich, but for

the Super-rich. It is blazingly expensive. They say it may be affordable to middle-income earners, but that's not true. As a middle-income class person, you have to be extremely corrupt to be able to finance that kind of lifestyle. It is a place where, not a full plot, but 1 square meter cost \$2,000 (N 320,000), now multiply it by 680 or 1000 square meters (i.e. the measurement for a full plot) depending on the area of Lagos. You have not talked about the structure. So if you look at everything about that project, from the planning, decision making, strategies, construction and partnership, they were all designed to be expensive. The concern that basically people like us have is that there are people who live on the fringes of those neighboring communities of the Atlantic Ocean. Those

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•Ohaeri

**The Eko Atlantic City project is purely an elitist project. It is a project designed not just for the rich, but for the super-rich. It is blazingly expensive.**

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## It's Not A Popular Idea – Ibezim-Ohaeri

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places are not empty places, there are human activities going on there. What happens to the people that are living on the coastlines? Where is the Government going to relocate them to?

**Are they aware that an Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out?**

I have been involved in a lot of discussions concerning this EIA, what actually happened is that there are different stages of the project and the EIA done only covered the first phase of the project. Now according to the Nigeria laws, the EIA should be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Environment that will now comment based on the findings and the assessment that have been made. The EIA was taken to the Federal Ministry of Environment and they raised certain objections and till this day, even without getting approval from the Federal Ministry of Environment, the project commenced. Now look at what they did: they hurriedly passed a state law, to proceed with dredging operations. There are so many issues that have come up. For instance, can a state law override a Federal law? Number two, can a project of that magnitude proceed without proper approval from the Federal Ministry of Environment? These are issues that a lot of environmentalist and advocates are asking. Of course, they may have noble intentions for setting up a high rise enclave that only the super rich can afford, but what about the underlying issues that most be addressed. For instance, though it may require a lot of scientific evidences to draw linkages between that project and a lot of things happening around that axis e.g. the frequent ocean surges since dredging commenced. The last ocean surge that took place recorded some casualties...

**Casualties?**

Yes, I mean some people died.

**Do you have the figure of the number of people that actually died?**

I will look at my records and give you the figure later. But there were people who really died, apart from the properties that were lost. Secondly, ever since that project started, the frequency of ocean surges have increased, but like I said earlier, it will require some scientific evidences to link these incidences with the project, but there are fringe communities that have experienced the rise in water levels. For instance if you go

**...tension is mounting... the truth is that the Boko Haram insurgency has taught us that there is no tension that is little."**

to Alpha beach, where people naturally use to trade or shop, places that tourist used to relax have been overtaken by water. These communities are no longer habitable and they have received verbal orders from the state Government to move to another location. Move to where? In other places all over the world, government doesn't just give verbal fiat and tell their citizens to move. Some of these communities are their ancestral villages and indigenous in the sense that they and their forefathers have lived there for decades. If for instance I decided to move to Isale Eko, will I now say I am from Isale Eko? Would I now go to that Local Government and collect a certificate of indigene-ship? Is that possible? Assuming you are a traditional ruler in these affected communities, can you go to Isale Eko, and exercise your authority? Of course that is not possible. So there are a lot of social issues that the government is overlooking and it seems that the emphasis is on economic gains, is money being placed above human life? Government needs to have a rethink and you know what, tension is mounting from these communities.

**How rife is this tension? Does it have the tendency to snowball into something of large scale defiance?**

The truth is that the Boko Haram insurgency has taught Nigerians a lot of lessons that there is no tension that is little. Every tension has the capacity to snowball into tension of uncontrollable height. We have seen the Niger Delta tension; we have seen enough examples in the North. Imagine the first time Ken Saro Wiwa started holding small rallies in Ogoni land; they were just little pockets of "we no go gree". Little pockets of actions, of course you know the scale now? You know how much the Federal Government is spending to bring these conflicts to at least manageable conditions? You remember that when Boko Haram started in the North, it was started by a simple Islamic clergy?

**From what we gathered, after the EIA was done, there was a public hearing and a lot of people (including stakeholders) were invited, why didn't you raise your objections then?**

I actually attended one of the "thing" you called a public hearing. Usually public hearing is something that is advertised on the pages of newspapers.

## In Whose Interest?

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super high density and costly commercial centre. Would you expect to find a low cost housing

You use all medium possible to notify the public that so and so will happen and when it happens you make sure that the real people voluntarily and willingly attend. But when you arrange a public hearing where 99% of the people in attendance are government officials, what kind of public hearing is that? Number one, you hardly hear notice of such meetings, so a few people are handpicked and told "see, we are discussing this matter today" and the hearing usually last for one to two hours. Sometimes if they are feeling charitable, they give you three hours.

**Are you by any means saying that there is a conscious effort on the side of the government to hoard information on the EIA findings?**

I am saying the way the government has carried on; it has done so in ways that suggest that public engagement is not part of their plan or strategy they want to employ. Usually when you carry out EIA and your findings reveal that a particular community may be affected slightly by your activities, while discussing the environmental risk, you are to get them involved. Because this is something that will affect them for generations to come, but that has not happened, so people go away with the impression that public engagement is not high on the agenda of the sponsors of this project.

**What about the positive aspect of the project? Are you considering that at all?**

Well the positive angle is that, yes it will beautify Lagos and make it ranked among cities like Dubai. As you know, even in Dubai, there are some districts more beautiful than others in aesthetics, but we are looking beyond aesthetics or designs based on aesthetics. Because it is not beauty that makes the city, it is the people that make the city. It is the infrastructure; the basic services the citizens have access to that make the city, not just the beauty.

**Is LASG even giving the slightest ear to your course as if affects the EAC project? Is the government by any means changing?**

I haven't seen much of that yet. However, it is possible that in response to a lot of pressure and advocacy there may have been some softening of heart on the side of LASG officials, especially in the area of social inclusion. But a lot more can be done.

in the centre of London or New York?" Oniru, in concord, classified EAC and other similar development as economically viable area, saying "it should be



•Frame

## It's not for the poor -David Frame

**David Frame is the Managing Director of South Energyx Nigeria Limited, the developing firm handling the Eko Atlantic City Project. In this interview with our reporter FRANCIS OGBONNA he explains that such project is meant for the class that can afford it. Excerpt...**

**THE EIA Act stipulates that an EIA is supposed to be carried out before any part of a project of such magnitude is executed, but in this case, while dredging started in 2009, the result of the first phase was only released in April 2011. Why?**

The rapid erosion of the coastline of Lagos is well documented. Along Bar Beach, Victoria Island in particular, the situation was threatening the very existence of low lying Victoria Island with the collapse of the Coastal road, Ahmadu Bello way in 2005/2006. Emergency action was instigated by Lagos Government (LASG) to avert a pending disaster. Subsequently violent storms could have devastated Victoria Island had the protection not been installed. LASG later publicly justified their course of action.

**Though the final draft of the EIA stated a few communities, particularly Okun Alfa, Langbasa, Maroko and several others along the Lekki axis were considered vulnerable. Doesn't SENL care about the possible impact on the environment and socio-economic well being of the surrounding communities that are likely to be affected by the project?**

SENL through their consultants engaged with those communities proposed by the Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) in full compliance with FME requirements. SENL takes these issues seriously and also take guidance from Government in the manner in which we engage on such matters.

**We also gathered that though, the EIA only**

**covered the dredging stage, construction work (piling for the first structure) has already started, without the EIA covering that phase of the project. Why is that so?**

The major environmental impact of the project was covered by the phase 1 EIA. SENL and their consultants are in regular contact with the FME who inspect the site on regular occasions to review activities. SENL is fully compliant with the requirements and instruction of the FME.

**About the public hearing held, some stakeholders have raised a few concerns. A) they were not adequately publicized, does this mean that public engagement is not part of SENL's plan? B) 90% of the participants were government officials hand picked for this purpose? C) If they were really publicized, what media were used?**

The events were publicized fully in compliance with the FME guidelines. The supposition that 90% of the participants were government officials is completely incorrect. In fact the level of public attendance was considerably greater. Concerning the media used, the event was publicized by direct engagement with identified stakeholders in the press and local radio as instructed by the FME.

**You said that EKO Atlantic City is a partnership between LASG and Chagoury Group as represented by South Energyx Nigeria Ltd? What type of partnership is it? Is it a joint venture or a Concession? A) If it is a joint venture, what is the percentage ratio of interest? B) If it is a concession, how**

**long will it last? C) If you are funded by banks, what is the nature of funding? D) If it is a loan facility, what are the terms? More so, how long do you have to pay back?**

SENL has a concession Agreement with LASG and the duration is 78 years. The funding is through a consortium of local and international banks and also incomes from sales. SENL's financial arrangement is confidential in line with international management protocols.

**1 square meters of land at the proposed city is alleged to cost about \$ 2,000? How much does it really cost? And does it mean from the onset that it is pure ly an elitist project?**

The sale of land in Eko Atlantic City (EAC) is very competitive when compared to other areas in Lagos such as Ikoyi, Victoria Island and early phases of Lekki. Given the enhanced facilities available in EAC, these rates represent good value. Eko Atlantic does not cater for just an elitist clientele. All countries with a thriving economy have a super high density and costly commercial centre. Would you expect to find a low cost housing in the centre of London or New York? Nevertheless, EAC helps to protect lower-income communities from the damage wrought by the sea. Furthermore, early proposed developments are designed to cater for middle-management/middle income members of society who are not served well by the existing residential market in Ikoyi, Victoria Island and Lekki.