

16-Year-Old Boy Drowns While Swimming In Rivers Community



By Bassey Willie, Port Harcourt

Sun, 31 May 2026 19:09:10 WAT



A 16-year-old boy, identified as Miebaka Koko, has drowned while swimming with friends in the Ogoloma community river in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The incident, which occurred on Saturday, caused panic in the community as water levels had risen significantly following persistent rainfall during the ongoing rainy season.

Daily Trust gathered that the deceased had gone swimming with three of his friends at Derock Waterside in Ogoloma when he was swept away by a strong current.

Sources in the community told Daily Trust that the boy's friends rushed out of the water to seek help after realising he was drowning, but assistance did not arrive in time.

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The Sector Commander of the Civilian Joint Task Force in Okrika Local Government Area, Mr Igwe Godswill, who confirmed the incident, attributed it to the increased depth of the river caused by dredging activities in the area.

Godswill said recovering bodies from rivers in the area is often difficult and may take several days, urging parents to caution their children against swimming in unsafe locations and to monitor their movements closely.

He also disclosed that security personnel, including a police officer and soldiers from Sector 3, witnessed the incident.

He said, “Companies have dredged almost all the waterfront areas in Okrika Local Government Area. The dredging has made the river much deeper. Just a step away from the riverbank can be dangerously deep.

“At about 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, four boys left the community and went to Derock Waterside in Ogoloma to swim.

“They entered the water and shortly afterwards, we saw the boys running out. A woman was also shouting for help. We rushed to the scene with another man and tried to rescue the boy. At one point, we could only see his hands above the water.

“However, the current was very strong and the man who attempted to rescue him could not reach him. Unfortunately, the boy drowned. It is very painful.

“If you are from this part of Rivers State, you will know that when someone drowns in our rivers, it often takes two or three days before the body can be recovered.

“I advise parents to warn their children about where they swim. Most of our rivers have been dredged and are now very dangerous. Parents should also keep track of where their children go.”

The body had not been recovered as of the time of filing this report.

Residents said bodies of drowning victims in the area often take up to three days to surface.

The spokesperson of the Rivers State Police Command, ASP Blessing Kaborlo Agabe, said that although no formal complaint had been lodged by the boy's family, the police were aware of the incident and had commenced inquiries.

She said, "The family has not made any report to the police. We encourage them to do so to enable us commence a proper investigation and determine the circumstances surrounding the incident."