

Tragedy as 16-year-old drowns in Rivers stream

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Map of Rivers State

| By Dennis Naku

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It was a tragic scene when a 16-year-old boy drowned in a river while swimming with friends in the Ogoloma community in the Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State on Saturday.

The deceased, Miebaka Koko, was said to have gone swimming with three of his friends at Derock Waterside in Ogoloma when he was suddenly swept away by a strong current.

According to eyewitnesses, the victim's friends were said to have quickly run out of the water to seek help after realising that he was in distress.

Speaking to journalists on Sunday, the Sector Commander of the Civilian Joint Task Force in Okrika LGA, Igwe Godswill, attributed the incident to the increased depth of the river caused by dredging activities in the area.

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

Recounting the incident, Godswill said, "At about 1:30 p.m. yesterday, 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.”

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He noted that recovering bodies from rivers in the area is often difficult and can take several days.

“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,” he added.

Godswill urged parents to caution their children against swimming in unsafe locations and to closely monitor their movements.

“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,” Godswill said.

The task force commander further disclosed that security personnel, including a police officer and soldiers from Sector 3, witnessed the incident.

Our correspondent reports that as of the time of filing this report, the body of the boy had not been recovered.

When contacted on Sunday, the spokesperson of the state police command, Blessing Agabe, said that although no formal complaint had been lodged by the boy’s relatives, the police are aware of the incident and have commenced an investigation.

Agabe stated, “Well, the family has not made any report to the police. So we encourage them to do that for us to commence proper investigation and determine the circumstances surrounding the incident.”

Dennis