



Death in a canal

By ETAGHENE EDIRIN

FOR years, the canal in Atobaje area of Agege, Lagos state had been a sore point in the lives of residents and traders in the area. The canal was usually clogged up, dumping its load of refuse and faeces carried from other areas unto the area. It must have elicited some form of joy therefore when government appointed contractors were seen working on it.

This joy however turned to sorrow, tears and pain as the channel became a canal of death. In quick succession the abandoned canal project claimed two lives within 30 minutes last Monday. Three months down the line, as is characteristic with governments around the country, the project lies abandoned.

The canal lies excavated, and the huge pile of the dugout sand and refuse heaped on both sides of the channel standing to about twenty feet high from the water level. The water itself is reported to be about 12 feet deep. Spikes of iron rods allegedly fixed at the bottom of the waterway for concrete were left unattended to and completely submerged by the water.

Its first victim was a newly married young man of about 35 years. At about 7pm while passing beside the canal on Kasumu Street, the earth gave way under him, and he was thrown into the water. Unable to swim, he purportedly drowned before help could come his way. He was confirmed dead when sympathizers pulled him out and rushed him to a nearby private hospital. The money found on him, about N12,000 was used to pay for deposit at the mortuary.

About 30 minutes later, the canal of death claimed another victim, this time a ten year old boy. The lad was walking along Adebare Street when he slipped into the canal. Nobody could summon enough courage to go after him, after some minutes of struggling, his lifeless body was pulled out. His family was said to have immediately taken away his corpse.

This incidence was said to have irked the some youths in the vicinity who went on a demonstration to the house of the traditional ruler in the area.

According to Prophet Solomon Abioye, founder of Powerline Centre Worldwide (CAC) whose church faces the canal on Ajebo Lane, three different contractors have so far worked on the site with none of them completing the project.

He revealed that the first was a woman who after a short time abandoned the tipper of gravel stone she had brought to the site. The stones were sighted by our reporter heaped at a corner and scattered.

He also noted that at the initial stages when residents of the area complained about the slow pace of work, the contractor pleaded for understanding that they were doing the best they could under the circumstances. He said they were thereafter left to do their jobs, only for them to abandon it halfway.

Another resident, Issa Damjuma who had worked with one of the contractors stated that his boss complained that the water was making it difficult for them to continue with the project. And that after some time he packed his equipments and took off.

Issa who was among those who pulled out the first victim from the canal stated that the victim would have probably survived if help got to him on time. According to him, people were scared to venture into the waters because they did not know what was inside. He said by the time they summoned courage to rescue the drowning fellow, it was too late. But when they brought him out, they tried to administer first aid to no avail. He said they pressed the victim's stomach to see if he had swallowed water but nothing came out, after which they had to rush him to the hospital where the doctor on duty pronounced him dead.

Mr. Taofeek Mutairu, a resident Adebare Street told *Sunday Champion* that the ten year old boy was walking close to the heap of dugout sand when he slipped and fell into the canal. According to him, the boy must have died on impact because he did not stay long in the water before it was noticed that he was still.

He said a stick was used to pull his body close to the shore of the waterway before his lifeless body could be pulled out.

For Mr. Amidu Babatunde Owolu, a tailor who has his shop on Kasumu Street, he was the lucky victim. A few days before he also fell into the canal but miraculously escaped with minor injuries. He said he was passing by when he slipped on the sand and fell in. Completely submerged by the dirty water he thought his end had come.

Amid who said he did not know how to swim before then, somehow summoned courage and strength to stay afloat before sympathizers helped pull him out.

Bishop Julius Babatunde Olusanya, chairman Olusanya Local Council Development Area (LCDA) who spoke to *Sunday Champion* bemoaned the death of the people and stated that he was at the site to see how the situation can be rectified to prevent further mishap.

Babasanya, who was in company of Mr. Fatai Kehinde Adageje, chairman, Atobaje LCDA also explained that the LCDAs were established to take care of the people at the grassroots. He called on the authorities concerned, namely, the contracted company, the Agege Local Government Council and the state government, to ensure the project is not reverted to its former state, to prevent further loss of lives.

He informed the authorities of the mishap,

and we have told them that if they find it difficult to complete as at now, they should come and put it back the way it was before. Because it has been there for long and has never taken the lives of people.

"They should come and take care of it to avoid a re-occurrence of such a thing".

He revealed that a company known as LMGDP was in charge of the project, and that they complained of the rains, which they said, is responsible for their putting the project on hold.



Babatunde the lucky victim



Man commits sui

- 5 days after police detention
- Anxiety over his gratuity mounts

By CHINEDU WOSU in Yenagoa

WHAT went wrong with a man who recently retired from the Bayelsa Civil service to commit suicide, after collecting his gratuity? What role did the wife, now on the run play in the suicide? Is there any link between the receipt of the gratuity and the suicide? These are the mysteries surrounding the suicidal death of Mr. Laminawal Isu, penultimate week, when the news broke out in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital. He was 55 years.

The incident which cause panic in his neighborhood as the Ogbia bread winner drank poison and died on his bed.

The sad incident happened on Punch Road in Amarata area of Yenagoa penultimate Friday evening at about 7 P.m.

The death of the deceased was described by neighbors as the boiling point of a long-drawn indifference with his wife over 10 years.

Sunday Champion gathered that neighbours of the deceased became apprehensive as they noticed that the door of his one-bed apartment had remained locked all day; a development they said was unusual.

Mr. Tari, a relation to the deceased said the door was forced open and they met late Isu dead with foam coming out of his mouth.

"The whole room was smelling of a chemical substance that we cannot really tell. No one actually know when he took his life, we only noticed his absence all day, because he normally sits with people outside since his wife left him", he said.

According to Tari, "This is a sacrilege in Ijaw land; we have sent for his extended family, when they arrived, he will be taken home for burial in the evil forest because our custom forbids suicide".

Our correspondent gathered that the deceased, hailed from Ogbia clan in Ogbia LGA of the state, and had recently retired from the state civil service.

Speaking to *Sunday Champion*, Miss Rose Isu, daughter of the deceased from a soared relationship said her father had suffered protracted psychological and emotional trauma in the hand of his wife who had four girls.

"The whole problem started shortly after my father retired, he had discussed with his wife on how to spend his gratuity which he just collected. Last time I spoke with him, he told me that he paid his money into his wife's account so that they can use it to do a family business".

Rose stated that no sooner had the money been paid

in the woman's account, the relationship between the deceased and the wife degenerated into daily squabble, as both of them engaged each other in a daily fight for supremacy.

She said that the last fight that actually led to the sad incident occurred after the deceased's wife fled the home with their four daughters without a notice about her destination.

"So the day when my father returned home, he discovered that his wife had ran away with his daughters, so he called a friend of his wife who told him that the wife had fled to Akenfa to safety with a family relative; so he went there to bring his children back home because of their schooling".

"E as he confronted his wife, a fight broke out, and in the process, the wife sustained an injury with which she ran to the Akenfa Police station to bring policemen who arrested my father and locked him up for five days, before

finally char Rose fi round and returned h of frustrati

"I don that my fat frustration, returned fr days, and n

Family whereabouts Akenfa hor had not re children.

When Eguavon E (ASP), said

He al the comm incident, e' investigat

"As I s the incident about the place, and will intimat not done s

