


# Sokoto community in shock after 3 kids drown

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The news of the death of three boys who drowned on Sunday June 24 at Gumbi in Wamakko LGA of Sokoto State came as a shock to the people of the district. The children, Muhammad Sani (12), Muhammad Abdulaziz (12), and Fodiyo (7), were on their way home with three other kids from collecting dried cornstalks, when they decided to swim in a small body of water at the end of a pedestrian bridge. Four of the youngsters decided to swim, while two watched from the bridge.

The young swimmers are suspected to have ventured into the deeper end of the water, believed to have been pits which once served as wells, from where residents of the town fetched water. The survivor, Hashimu Sani (12), said he had to struggle to get out of the water which claimed his friends.

Narrating to Daily Trust Saturday, Sani, a primary two pupil of Yar'Abba Model Primary School, said it was the mother of one of the deceased children who sent them to get the dried cornstalk for her. "After collecting them, we decided to swim," he admitted.

On how he survived, he said though he is a good swimmer, he struggled against the tide before he got hold of some shrubs by the side of the water and swam to safety. According to him, the other two boys who didn't join them bolted away when they sensed danger.

Sani, who attributed the loss of his friends to the rapid surge of the water, rushed back to town to get help as soon as he got out.

"On my way, I met an elderly man who upon hearing the story abandoned his donkey and rushed to the site. He swiftly went in search of the boys and was able to bring out the lifeless body of one of them, while the remaining two were found later."

On how he feels about losing his friends, he bowed down his head and after some seconds burst into tears and went away.

The guardian of one of the deceased children, 45-year-old Abdulaziz Umar, a phone accessories merchant, described the incident as shocking. He said his ward Muhammad who is an orphan came to greet him as usual in the morning. Umar said thereafter he left for the market.

"Ordinarily, I stay late in the market but on that day, I had this uneasy feeling so I closed early and went home at about 4pm," he disclosed.

"On my way home, I met a group of young boys talking about some children who drowned and not knowing that my child was among them."

Umar described the deceased as obedient and respectful. "He always obeys my instructions to go to Islamiyya School instead of roaming the street with other boys. He said the deceased lost his father at the age of 9 and had been with him since then.

For Bello Maidamma (33) who lost 7-year-old Fodiyo, it was unbelievable that a boy he saw moments earlier was no more. He said at about 2pm on the fateful day, he gave Fodiyo money to buy fura because his mother was not at home to feed him. "Two hours later, I was called back home to the devastating news of my child drowning alongside other children," he stated.

The third victim, Muhammad Sani, was new in Gumbi. He came with his mother from Bagarawa Village in Bodinga Local Government Area of Sokoto. The mother decided to go to her relation at Gumbi for fear of

assault because she was living alone in her house at Bagarawa where she alleged that there were rampant cases of rape and assault.

At Gumbi, Muhammad decided to go with the other boys to the farm from where they went to swim, a move that cost them their lives, leaving the community grief-stricken.