

# Three children die in Delta flood

From Chido Okafor, Warri

## • Community accuses Chevron of silting River

THREE children have reportedly died in Polobubo-Teskelewu community as flood hit several communities in Warri North Council, Delta State.

The children – two boys and a girl, aged two to five years – from two different families, died in agonising circumstances, according to their parents.

Gift Suku, Praise-God Suku and Annabel Kane were said to be playing outside when they were overwhelmed by the rising flood and were washed away. Their corpses were later discovered in the swamps.

Mr. David Suku, father to Gift and Praise-God who died in different but similar circumstances, said: "The water was rising quickly. The children fell into the water and nobody was

around. Before we could find them, they were already dead."

In tears, his wife, Doris, corroborated him.

She narrated how one of her sons died, "I was at home when the child went out to play. I thought he was at my sister in-law's place. I didn't see him, so I went to ask them. They said he had returned home. We looked for him. It was in the morning. We later saw him already dead."

Also, Mr. Enoch Kane recalled the fateful day he lost his daughter: "She died on August 16. I lost my daughter to the flood. She walked to the backyard, unknowing to me, and fell into the pool. We looked for her, only to find her drowned. She was two years old and wasn't used to swimming."

Meanwhile, the community has accused Chevron Nigeria Limited of depositing silt in its River and called on the Federal Government to direct the oil major to dredge the inland waterways, as they mourn the deceased.

The secretary general of Polobubo National Council, Mr. Midwest Kukuru, who described the development as "harrowing and disturbing", insisted that Chevron was responsible for the disaster.

He disclosed that the American firm dug a canal that linked the River in the community with the Atlantic Ocean.

According to him, the silt from the ocean came through the canal into river.

Said he, "When it rains, the water overflows the banks, submerges houses and

causes problems for residents."

He added that the river used to be deep until the arrival of Chevron.

The medical director of the community's health facility, Dr. Terry Itimi, said patients had to be moved from the wards, as the theatre was rendered useless.

He said, "No surgery can occur at the moment. It is very important that the government or whoever is in charge comes to the aid of these people because this is the only functional hospital around this Polobubo vicinity, and people come from the neighbourhoods to get medical care."

The flood did not spare the community's only primary school, Miyen Primary School, as the premises remained submerged since schools resumed, causing discomfort and agony to pupils and teachers.

