

Tragedy In Minna As Flood Kills Five Kids

By Chinwendu Nnadozie
REPORTER, Minna

Children are blessings from God, and their arrival is often welcome with merriment and praises to the Almighty.

But recently, the happiness of three different families in Minna metropolis came to abrupt end a fortnight ago when five kids between the ages of four and eight died in a flood after a torrential rainfall in the state capital.

Of the five deceased children, two, Mohammed Yakubu (8), and Abdullahi Yakubu (5), were of the same parentage, while Amos Danjuma Wakili was the first son of a Senior Reporter with the state-owned publishing company, Newline Newspaper, Mr. Danjuma Wakili, who had no premonition of the bad omen lurking nearby that fateful day. He had left for office not knowing he was going to lose one of his children to flood.

Another agonising thing is that while four of the bodies have been recovered, one is yet to be found days after a desperate search at the riverbank and surrounding stagnant waters.

Unknown to the search party, while searching for the bodies of Mohammed Yakubu Chechi and Abdullahi Yakubu Chechi, two other bodies were recovered, which made them believe that there were more than two victims washed away by flood after the previous day's rainfall. The identity of the other two victims recovered a day after the torrential rain is yet to be known. The search party stumbled on the bodies while searching for Amos Wakili.

Mohammed and Abdullahi Yakubu were playing football in front of their house with their friends while the rain was falling and was discovered to have disappeared after the rain. It took the combined efforts of friends and acquaintances of the bereaved families to organise a search party.

As the children were playing soccer,

the ball rolled into a deep drainage beside the open space where they were playing, which was also close to the house they lived. Not wanting the rain to deprive them of their pleasure, they went to recover the ball, and Abdullahi, who is the younger of the two brothers, jumped into the drainage unaware of its depth.

Mohammed, who watched as his younger brother was being ferried away by the flood along with the ball, decided to assist his junior brother and also jumped into the drainage. But in a twinkling of an eye both children and the ball were washed by the flood into a nearby flowing river.

The once cheerful playmates watched helplessly as Abdullahi and Mohammed Chechi disappeared into the river and raised an alarm. But by the time help came it was rather too late. When parents of the unfortunate kids came to the scene, the kids could not be traced again.

In the case of young Amos, he had gone in company of his friends to watch the drainage, which passed through where his parents lived. What could have attracted the boy and his friends to the drainage at that particular time remains a question of curiosity. At a point, little Amos and his peers, according to his friends, were said to have been attracted to the drainage because of the force of the flood's activity.

Suddenly, Amos lost balance and his footwear slipped into the drainage. Not wanting to lose his footwear, the friends said that in an effort to retrieve the footwear he also ended up in the drainage and was completely submerged and flushed away.

Sympathisers' efforts to trace and recover the body of Amos yielded no fruits even after the rain. However, the family and friends of the deceased intensified efforts in their search till the second day when they stumbled on two different unidentified bodies instead of



• Some victims of the flood

Amos's body they were searching for.

The two bodies were discovered as they were trapped in muddy water and their sizes bloated, while their shapes had already been tampered with probably due to activities of the flood.

Mallam Yakubu Musa, the father of Mohammed and Abdullahi, who is a civil servant, could not believe his ears that fateful day when he returned home to hear the sad news. He had instructed the kids to ensure they attended the Islamic class for children, *Islamia*, that day.

According to Mallam Yakubu, he had instructed Mohammed and Abdullahi to ensure they attended the Quranic recitation class located a few metres

away from their residence, but came back only to hear that the kids had been washed away by flood.

"Mohammed and Abdullahi were given to me by Allah, and their deaths in this circumstance is best known to Allah, because no one can question the authority of the Almighty, who has power over life and death," he said.

Meanwhile, the Niger State Governor, Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, has paid a condolence visit to the families of Mohammed and Abdullahi.

Aliyu, who was visibly disturbed by the circumstances that led to the children's death, blamed it on the poor drainage system within Minna and the attitude of residents who drop refuse

indiscriminately into drainage pipes.

The Governor was one of the first sympathisers that visited the families of the bereaved to commiserate with them. He prayed God to give the families the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss, and also cautioned the people of Niger State against indiscriminate dumping of refuse and blocking of drainages.

He also donated unspecified amount of money to the families. According to Aliyu, the government embarked on road construction not only to restore the beauty of Minna as the state capital but to ensure functional drainage system that would not endanger the lives of the people especially children who mostly fall victims to floods.