

Tragic end of a teenager

• Dies in canal trying to rescue his drowning friend

EMOTIONS rose last Friday when the body of a teenager was being pulled out of a canal at Ajayi Aina Estate, Ekor Road, Ishaga, a Lagos suburb. Sympathisers broke down in tears. It was 24 hours after a frantic search for the body of the victim, 13-year-old Moses Abalogu.

Last Thursday, he slipped into the 150-foot-deep canal while trying to rescue his drowning friend. His body was eventually recovered by some divers.

The Nation gathered that the victim, a Junior Secondary School (JSS 2) student at P.P High School, Agbele, went to the canal around 4 pm on the fateful Thursday with his twin brother and a friend to "catch fish."

His parents were said to have been "kept somewhere", nursing the grief of the loss. But his elder brother, Richard Abalogu, who was at the canal when Moses' body was recovered, said: "I warned my brother and others not to go to the canal before I left for work that morning. Their father also warned them. He went to church with his mother, but he returned home to change his clothes. When he came home, he played football with his brothers before his friend came to take him to the canal."

Richard added: "It was the friend that fell inside the canal. As Moses made to rescue him, he too fell inside; unfortunately for him, there was nobody to help him out."

A 17-year-old student of Commu-



• The 'canal of death'

By Seun Akioye

nity High School, Meiran told *The Nation* details of how he risked his life in his failed bid to rescue Moses: "I was coming from school around 5 pm when I saw some boys fishing in the canal. I drove them away because the canal is very dangerous. Then around 6 pm, I saw them there again, shouting that someone was inside the water. I rushed down and being a swimmer, I jumped inside and went deep into the water."

"I saw him (the late Moses) inside the water and made his hand to grab my feet so I could drag him out. His grip was firm and we made progress until we got to the top when he suddenly let go of my leg and sank back into the water. I could not locate him afterwards because the water was dirty. At that time, my own life was in danger, so I ran ashore to call Fire Servicemen."

Another eyewitness, Femi Adeyemo, a resident of the estate said the depth of the water pre-

vented many people from attempting further rescue efforts.

Firemen searched frantically for the victim's body that Thursday from about 7 pm until 10pm without success. The next day, they resumed, but failed to recover the body until some Hausa divers were contacted. They eventually recovered the boy's body at about 12 noon.

However, some residents blamed the incident on the shoddy work done by a government contractor, who built the canal in 2008. They added that they had made several futile efforts to draw the government's attention to the canal.

"This canal is a death trap. It is too small for the water being diverted into it from Ijaiye, Jankara, Amikanle and Oke-Odo. Whenever it rains, we are in trouble. The abandonment of the canal is what has claimed this boy's life," Ayodeji Ibrahim, an official of the estate's residents' association said.

Another resident, Tope Awolaja,

said the community had spent more than N3million to fight erosion, adding: "For the abandonment of the canal, the volume of water flowing in it over the years has created gullies in that axis. All the houses in this estate are at risk. We have complained and the contractor has even boasted that we couldn't do anything to him."

From Imulokanle Street, where the canal joins the estate, there are construction errors that cause flooding whenever it rains. Also, on Ekor Road by Ishaga Junction, the canal's outlet is small, thus precipitating flooding.

Meanwhile, the victim's body has been handed over to his family for burial. The Chief Fire Officer in charge of Agege Fire Service, Ayantompe Oluwasegun, told *The Nation*: "We got a call at exactly 6.31pm that Thursday and we immediately mobilised to the scene. We searched the canal but the rain that fell that day disturbed our men."

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