

• **Buildings threatened by the edge of the channel** PHOTOS: NICOLAS KALU

IT looked like a scene from an adventure movie. A young girl hung precariously on the cliff of an erosion-dug pit, her life in the balance. She was hanging by the thread waiting for a miracle and a hero to end her nightmare on that Friday afternoon.

But this was not movie and there was no Superman, Spiderman or any one of the fictional heroes that would usually surface and whisk her to safety.

The scene on Atimbo Road in Calabar Municipality that afternoon was real. The crowd watched in horror as the ground gave way and the little girl was sucked into the ground and buried alive.

The most people could do was scream and wail as they watched, helplessly. Any heroic attempt to do anything could have added to the list of fatality.

When she was removed from the bottom of the gully eventually, she was dead.

The erosion ridden spot on

Atimbo Road has been worsened by the persistent rains.

The victim, who could not be identified, was also out of curiosity like many others in the area, edging towards the brink of the widening gully when the incident occurred.

Residents of the area and the Atimbo Road users said they have made several spirited pleas to the government to do something about the place, but all to no avail.

When Niger Delta Report visited the site, it was observed that the gully was a water channel which had widened, forming a gaping chasm that threatened structures built along its edges. The water channel itself passed under the Atimbo Road, which links Calabar to Akpabuyo and Bakassi Local Government Areas.

Already the erosion had started chewing into the road as portions close to the road have started caving in - the spot the ill-fated girl stood.

It was also observed that the road itself was at risk of

collapsing, thereby threatening to cut away the two local governments from the state.

Residents told our reporter that if nothing is done urgently about the situation, the little girl would be only the first among many who would lose their lives in the place.

Vice Chairman of Calabar Municipality, Mr David Nsemo said several attempts had been made to bring the attention of the state government to the place to address the situation when it had not even worsened to how it is now. He also feared that the Atimbo Road faced imminent collapse if there was no urgent intervention.

He also said those who were building close to the water channel had been warned to evacuate the place but they remain adamant. "You can see the danger they have exposed themselves by living where they are now," he said.

A resident, who simply identified himself as Michael, recalled that a similar inci-

dent had happened around Beebobsco along the highway. He said that one had been addressed by the government.

"We know this place is not the highway where anybody coming into the city has to pass through, but this road is equally important. Remember this is the road where all the trucks carrying UNICEM cement from Mfamosing pass through and if this road collapses, activities at the company would be grounded and it would not be to the best interest of the state.

"But more importantly, the lives that would definitely be lost if government does not check the situation, should prompt them to come in quick and do something. We are begging that they come in save us now."

Checks revealed that the eroded water channel connected to the Burrow Pit Community in Atimbo, where a family of six were killed in a mudslide that buried a house last week.