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You are here: [Home](#) / [Metro Plus](#) / [Eight pupils drown in A'lbom river](#)

Eight pupils drown in A'lbom river

JULY 27, 2015 : ETIM EKPIMAH 6 COMMENTS



Atang river

| credits: Etim Ekpimah

Eight pupils, who were returning from a primary school in Ikot Abia-Enyie in the Nsit Atai Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, have perished in the Atang River.

The river is said to have divided Ikot Abia-Enyie village into two; with all the facilities in the area — a health centre, a primary and a secondary schools — located on one side of the river.

The Chairman of the village council, Chief Etop Umanah, on Friday said the pupils drowned in the river following a downpour which made the river to overflow its bank.

He stated that it was the custom of the villagers to wait for the pupils and women at the bank of the river after the closing hours whenever there was a downpour.

He said the pupils were crossing the river from their schools to the other side when the incident happened.

Umanah added that before the men from the village could get to the river to rescue the pupils, the river had taken them away. He added that their corpses were recovered three days after.



He revealed that in 2014, three pupils and a pregnant woman died in the river, noting that the pupils were also coming back from school, while the pregnant woman was making her way back from the health centre.

"This village, Abia-Enyie, lost the eight children to the Atang River as they were returning from school following a downpour which aided the river to overflow its bank. Last year, we lost three pupils and a pregnant woman in the same manner.

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Abandoned bridge project. Photo: Etim Ekpimah

"The village is one village; it is split by this river. All the facilities of this village — a health centre, a primary and a secondary schools — are at the other side of the river.

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We cannot stop the children from going to school," he said.

The Commissioner for Rural Development, Mr. Ekong Sampson, who lamented the loss, said the state government was making moves to end all deaths associated with the Atang River.

He said, "It pained the government to see Akwa Ibom children perishing in river.

"The government will soon embark on remedial measures to end the carnage before the construction of a link bridge will start.

He said, "That is why I have chosen to come here. I am really touched by what I have seen.

"We will make every effort to ensure that infrastructure is brought to this community and to every other rural space in the state.

"The state government is committed to transforming our rural space because we all come from villages.

"The state government is committed to recreating the villages and making lives better for those who live in our villages."

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