

# Four-year-old boy drowns in canal while returning from church

29th November 2023

By Naomi Chima

The family of Daniel Oyedokun has been thrown into mourning after their four-year-old son drowned in a canal on his way back from church on Sunday at Awori Street, Dopemu, Agege in Lagos State.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that the deceased was swept away by the flood that accompanied the heavy rain on that day.

The distraught father of Daniel, Olabode Oyedokun, in an interview with *PUNCH Metro* on Tuesday, said the son followed their neighbour to church as he was unable to go with him to their own church.

Olabode popularly called Baba Ibeji said he got to the house and met people standing and weeping, and when he inquired what was the problem, he was told that his son had drowned in the canal. He said he rushed there only to find out that it was true.

 Gutter in Awori Street Photo: File ie neighbour took his son and other children to the church.

Speaking in pidgin English, Olabode said, “The boy said he wanted to follow my neighbour to church and I allowed him. I was a little sick and I couldn’t take him to my own church.

“The sister of my neighbour led them to church and when they closed, although it was still raining, they left for home.

“Getting to the canal, my neighbour’s sister who took them, was crossing the children one after the other. So, she asked Daniel to stand at the edge of the canal, while she crossed the others but he accidentally stepped on the water and slipped into the canal.

“I got home and met a crowd. They said something had happened at the Awori Canal. I quickly rushed there and they told me that my son Daniel fell into the canal and had drowned.

“I didn’t know what to do. I was told his body was found in a gutter so I had to go to the police to retrieve his body and we buried him.”

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The Ekiti State indigene however blamed the church for allowing the children to leave the church premises while it was still raining heavily.

“It’s the church that I blame; they shouldn’t have allowed children to leave while it was raining heavily like that. They should have closed the gate very well until the rain stopped.

“The girl who took him to the church is about 15 or 16 years old and a sister to my neighbour. She is at my house now, crying. What will I do? My child has gone. What will I do? My child is gone,” he lamented.

When asked how his wife was faring, she took the phone but couldn’t speak because she was crying and in so much pain. She however managed to say she was grateful to God that she still has a set of twins, a boy and a girl.

Confirming the event, the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, said the police started a search for the boy immediately after they received the report but unfortunately didn’t find him alive.

Hundeyin said, “The police received a report on November 26 that a four-year-old boy fell into a canal at Awori Steet, in Dopemu, the Agege area of Lagos State while returning from church during the heavy rainfall.

“With the assistance of the officers of the Lagos State Command and divers from the state fire service, we swung into action immediately.

“Unfortunately, the lifeless body of the boy was recovered inside the gutter along the same street.”

He said the father of the boy applied to retrieve his corpse after it was recovered from the gutter for immediate burial and the corpse was released to him.

Hundeyin sympathised with the parents of the boy, and however, advised parents to keep a close watch on their children especially those living along water channels to avoid any tragedy such as this.