

How 7 people drowned in Shagari River

WHAT was intended to be an aid ended in sorrow penultimate Thursday when seven people drowned in Shagari River at Gangam village in Sokoto State.

It was between 5:30pm and 6pm that fateful day, there were signs of rain, so some six farmers who were said to have been coming from the harvest of beans wanted to quickly get home, so they approached a fisherman who had a small canoe to help them cross to the other side of the river where their houses are.

The owner had warned that the canoe was for trapping fish but they insisted that he assists them to cross the river because the rainstorm that was gathering momentum. So he obliged. But midway into the journey, they got into trouble. A powerful wind started blowing and water flooded the

canoe.

They attempted to drain the water-logged canoe, but failed. The canoe sank with them.

Meanwhile, a commercial canoe operator who was with a safety jacket saw them in danger and immediately gave the jacket to the one who was peddling the canoe. He later survived but the other six died.

Unfortunately, another person on a big calabash, 'Duma' peculiar to Hausa fishermen, died in an effort to rescue the victims. This brought the number of deaths to seven.

According to the survivor's elder brother, Mal. Danbuga Tela, the victim had been taken to the Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University Teaching Hospital, UDUTH, Malam Dandi Modi said he lost his

35-year-old sister while Jamilu Modi lost his younger brother who was eight years old. A 12-year-old girl was also said to have been among the six who died.

The Marafan Gangam, Alhaji Muhammadu Abubakar advised people to avoid using canoes during rainstorms. He said though this is the first of such incident in the village, a similar one had been recorded in another part of the local government area.

The Marafan Gangam and relatives of the victim collectively appealed to government to provide bigger canoes for them since they are farmers who have to cross the river to engage in their activities.

"We cannot avoid crossing the river. It is in between our farms and our houses", they noted.

Chairman of the Local government, Alhaji Abdullahi Dan Jeka said he had delivered the message of the state's Deputy Governor, Barrister Mukhari Shagari who donated food items to families of the victims.

He said the local government had last year purchased canoes for



ALHAJI Muhammadu Abubakar

three areas of Gangam, Kambara and Lambara.

The council chairman also said the federal legislator representing the area, Alhaji Aminu Shagari had provided safety jackets to commercial canoe operators in the area.

The chairman however promised that more safety jackets would be provided for the people.

They attempted to drain the water-logged canoe, but failed. The canoe sank with them