

It is common knowledge that good roads are essential infrastructure for the inevitable human needs of travelling and communication. Last Monday, an accident involving a trailer and one Toyota Corolla claimed the lives of 7 people in Masama Village along Malisa-Gwandu Road in Gwandu Local Government Area of Kebbi State.

According to an eye witness, Garba Bala, the incident occurred around 8:30pm as the commuters finished their business transactions and left the weekly Dodoru market in Gwandu Local Government for home.

Sunday Trust gathered that the accident involved a trailer with registration number ZT 905 FST and one Toyota First Lady with registration number AJ 346ABC.

“As we arrived the scene of the fatal event we were shocked and terrified having noted that most of the people in the car were dead and a few were screaming for help. We brought them out and urged other motorists to help communicate the matter to the police or Federal Road Safety Commission or any relevant agency of the sad situation,” Bala said.

Though the cause of the accident was not yet ascertained, majority of those interviewed believed that the Toyota car driver overtook another vehicle while others suspected tyre burst which could have led the car to the other lane crashing into the trailer coming from the opposite direction.

Speaking over the situation, the Sector Commander for the FRSC in Kebbi State, Muhammad Garba attributed the cause of the incident to reckless driving maintaining that the agency has been engaging in intensive awareness campaign for safe driving.

The Sector Commander who lamented the situation and warned that any driver found violating the established driving rules would be made to face the wrath of the law.

The names of the deceased were given as Alhaji Bawa Shanya, Zaki Osama, Maidamma Aiki, Ummaru Dan Sabongari, Muhammadu Tsamiya, Umaru Dan Iya from Ambursa town of Birnin-Kebbi Local Government Area and one Abubakar Aliyu.

Our Correspondent's visit to Ambursa uncovered that unlike the other six who were businessmen, the father of Umaru Dan Iya, Malam Abubakar Kwazo, said his son was a school teacher in Birnin-Kebbi and only went to the Dodoru market to buy a motorcycle.

“We learnt that there was an accident. We did not know whether he was involved or not. It was the following morning when his brothers went to check his whereabouts they found him among the dead,” the father said.

According to Kwazo, the deceased had never gone to the market maintaining that he was not the type to patronize the weekly market. He added that his 30 year-old son only went to the market to purchase a motorcycle.

“He went but he could not find his choice. He intended to come back without buying it. On his way back he met those who were destined to die. He joined them in the car that killed them,” the father stated in a sad undertone.

“I left everything in the hand of God the Almighty. No driver can cause the death of any soul.

It is only God that can take the live that is given by Him alone”.

At the residence of the other deceased the story is the same. All the family members and relatives converged at the family houses of the victims to receive friends and relatives that went to condole them.

Malam Abubakar Muhammad Ambursa the junior brother to the deceased driver; Malam Umaru Dansabongari, said they were shocked to hear the sad incident. He told Sunday Trust that his brother, Dansabongari, aged over 50 had been a driver for over ten years. Ambursa said the deceased had never experienced any accident during his period.

Sunday Trust gathered that majority of the deceased were family men. Abubakar Aliyu aged 35 is survived by 2 wives and 7 children while the driver left behind 11 children and 3 wives and was described as very kind and supportive.

In Nigeria, the months of September to December of every year are regarded as months of death; during which a high number of road accidents and deaths are recorded annually, as such Nigerian roads are infamously termed “agents of population reduction”.

Over 1.3 million people are killed by road accidents and 50 million injured across the world’ annually; statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO) have shown; over 80 per cent of the figure are recorded in developing countries like Nigeria, with Africa having the highest death rates. WHO predicted that if nothing is done by countries to stem the tide, by 2015 to 2020 death by road accidents would increase by 65 per cent, overtaking death from malaria and tuberculosis.

Despite concerted efforts of stakeholders to reverse the trend, the incessant auto accidents in Nigeria appear to have defied solution. Statistics from the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) indicates that 4,120 persons lost their lives while 20,975 others were seriously injured in fatal accidents that involved 11,031 vehicles across the nation in 2009. The record shows 11,341 accidents with total number of deaths put at 6,661 and 27,980 injured in 2008. Also, between January and June last year, 5,560 cases of auto accidents were recorded in which 3,183 persons lost their lives and 14,349 others sustained various degrees of injuries.

Currently Nigeria loses three billion naira every year to road crashes costing Nigeria 13 per cent of her Gross National Product (GNP) – a loss which undoubtedly inhibits economic and social development, the record has shown.

The continuation of the trend cast doubts on the effectiveness of various campaign strategies against road accidents organized by the authorities concerned including the introduced ‘Operation Eagle Eye’ in 2008 and ‘Operation Zero’ in 2009; the 2010 campaign was tagged “Operation Zero Tolerance: Sanctity of Life” and in 2011 the campaign was shifted to “Achieving the Decade of Action on Road Safety 2011-2020”.

Even though roads in Kebbi State have received remarkable improvement over the years, the state is not free from fatal road accidents.