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Canoe mishaps rocking boats at Sokoto village

By Rakiya A. Muhammad, Sokoto | Publish Date: Jan 1 2016 10:50PM | Updated Date: Jan 1 2016 10:52PM

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At Kambama, a village in Shagari Local Government Area of Sokoto State, canoe mishaps are a regular occurrence on the expansive lake they live beside, sometimes with high casualty figures. Residents revealed that hardly a week passes without canoes capsizing, describing the rate as frightening. On Sunday, December 1, 2015, one of such incidences occurred at about 11:00am where five passengers, including a one-year-old child, lost their lives. Those who died in the incident were a couple: Mohammed Ali, 55, and Hauwa'u, 30. Also, Ubaida, 27, three-year-old Aisha and others.

Residents lament that every year during the Harmattan season, a number of people lose their lives in canoe mishaps on the lake. They blamed the prevailing situation on the community's lack of motorable roads to Shagari, the local government headquarters and other communities. Daily Trust gathered that there are over 10 communities at the other side of the earth dam and their only exit to the outside world was to cross the lake.

Incidentally, the only available mode of transport is by canoe which residents say has remained largely unsafe especially during rainy and

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Harmattan seasons. Some communities across the river that frequently use canoes include Kambama ,Kalgo, Sullubawa, GidanDawa, Gidan Rake, Bela, Guloru, Lugge, Adamawa, GidanDogo and Gidan Hussaini.

The Sarkin Ruwa, Abdullahi Ma'aikachi expressed worry over how weather conditions have been contributing to regular canoe mishaps. Also, due to shortage of boats, paddlers sleep by the lake, and because of the number of communities across the water, canoe paddlers spend their nights ferrying passengers, till morning, he disclosed.

Buttressing this, a fisherman in the area, Malam Abubakar Homa, bemoaned: "The water is no longer safe, and people kept dying." The lack of roads to these communities, the inhabitants complained, makes many government programmes and policies out of reach.

Voicing what he described as collective outrage, a local said medical field workers during polio immunization exercises do not show up for the fear of crossing the lake. "Even campaigns by politicians hardly take place in such villages," he said.

The councillor representing Kambama ward, Sanusi Mohammed Kambama confirmed the situation, adding that the problem was compounded by lack of adequate and healthy canoes, as the motorized one donated to the community had developed engine problems.

The councillor recalled that in 2008, the Rep for Shagari/Yabo federal constituency, Aminu Shehu Shagari donated four motorised boats and 80 life jackets to four communities of Shagari, Gangam, Lambara and Kambama. "The one in Kambama where it is even needed the most developed engine problem due to frequent use to ferry villagers across." He however said recently, the local government council procured two big motorized engine boats which he hoped would be allocated to Kambama ward whose communities, he said, are in dire need of their services.

The councillor also emphasised the need for government to construct Dandin-Mahe Kambama and Dandin Mahe-Gidan Yausi roads.

Former Caretaker Committee chairman of the area, Engr. Mohammed Jabbi Shagari who is also APC Chairmanship candidate for Shagari in the forthcoming local government elections in Sokoto State recalled that while steering the affairs of the council, he requested for six power boats out of which the Sokoto Rima River Development Authority gave them two. He called on the authorities to hasten the production of the remaining boats.

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