

56 feared dead in Niger boat disaster

From Ahmed Tahir Ajobe, Minna

Fifty-six people are feared to have drowned in a boat mishap on River Kaduna between Galadiman-Kogo and Kwata-Zuma in Shiroro local government area of Niger State.

The incident happened when a big boat which was carrying 60 people capsized as a result of heavy rain storm between 10 and 11 on Saturday morning.

The Director General of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), Alhaji Ahmed Ibrahim Inga, in a phone interview with our correspondent over the incident, said that four people

were rescued alive by local divers.

He said the occupants of the boat, mostly women and children, were going to Kwata-Zuma market when the incident occurred.

He said from the interaction of the agency officials with natives of both communities, majority of the occupants of the boat were from communities in neighboring Kaduna State, adding that only two Fulani from Galadiman-Kogo were confirmed to be Niger indigenes in the ill-fated boat.

He said it was too early to assume that all the 56 people died, as in some past boat mishaps, some people survived by clinging to available objects,

while some strong swimmers among them swam ashore.

Inga said agency officials and those of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) as well as local divers were currently searching for the victims.

"We will avail you with update from time to time," he assured.

The Police Public Relations Officer of Niger State, DSP Babalola Adewole said the casualty figure was yet to be ascertained.

He said a rescue team had been sent to the area from the state marine police unit, and that information about the dead would become clearer when reports came from the unit.