

How 13 children died in Sokoto boat mishap

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Memories of the tragic death of 13 children of Rimawa village, Goronyo Local Government Area of Sokoto State in a canoe mishap on Rafin Kana dam still linger.

Ten girls and three boys whose ages ranged from six to 15 years, died in the Monday February, 19 2018 disaster while on a “business” trip. They included Arzika Salihu, 6, Maryam Amadu, 8, Bashar Salisu, 9, Mubarak Ibrahim, 10, Ubaida Muhammad, 12, Umar Faruk, 12, Rashida Bawa, 14, Rukayya Muhammad, 14, Hadiza Ibrahim, 14, Saadatu Salisu, 14, Shamsiyya Muhammad, 14, Asmau Yusuf, 15 and Saratu Ali, 15.

The kids were on their way across the river to fetch Gajiji, a fragrant plant which they sell at N100 a measure to a Sokoto-based company. Many children in the area are noted to search for the plant to earn money.

The canoe they used was said to have been left ashore by a local fisherman. Adventurous as kids are, one of youngest among them, volunteered to paddle the canoe,

though he had never done that before The amateur paddler never knew the disaster that lied ahead.

The misadventure claimed the lives of 13 of them as the canoe capsized. The boy who peddled the ill-fated canoe narrowly survived.

The community was thrown into bereavement. Some of the parents of the affected children were reportedly admitted in the hospital for shock after they received the devastating news of their children's deaths.

Three of the bereaved parents spoke to Daily Trust on Sunday on the disconcerting incident. Forty-year-old Adamu Bello who lost two children, Hadiza and Mubarak, pulled a long face as he spoke on the incident. "I saw my children last on Sunday February 18, when I welcomed them back from the Gajiji digging trip," stated the grieving father. He recalled that Hadiza spent a good part of the night watching recorded films on her cell phone. "It was not usual because she goes to bed early and by the time it is 10pm, she is fast asleep but that Sunday night, she stayed awake up to 1:00 a.m. watching the films."

Bello added: "For Mubarak, I noticed that he cried a lot when his mother was shaving his hair with a razor blade and later cut his toenails. It is not usual to see Mubarak crying because of shaving or nail cutting."

The heartbroken parent described the two children as obedient, disciplined and well- behaved. For Yusuf Yakub, the father of 15-year-old, Asmau, a SS1 student of Government Secondary School, Rimawa, the anguish of losing a dear child was too much for him.

“It was her first trip in search of the Gajiji seeds, I had warned her severally not to go digging of the plant for fear of the unknown and the worse has happened. She didn’t even inform me about the trip for fear that I may not allow her, so I did not even see her going,” he stated despondently.

He revealed that though Asmau had severally showed interest in joining other children for such trips, she never did, until she embarked on the voyage that took her life. “I have left everything to Almighty Allah who willed that she dies in the mishap,” he declared.

Asmau’s school Principal, Malam Haruna Ahmad described her as a brilliant, well-disciplined and popular student.

Musa Umar, another grief-stricken father who lost a child, 12-year-old Faruk, said his son was also embarking on his first trip. The daily routine of the late Faruk, a primary 3 pupil was to hawk sugarcane after school hours and then go to Islamiyyah school later in the evening.

Umar revealed more about his late son: “He usually slept at my elder brother’s house. On the night before the incident, my brother’s wife met Faruk sitting at night instead of sleeping. When she enquired from him why he was awake, he said he was thirsty and she gave him water.”

Weeks after, Rimawa is still in mourning for the teenagers who would have perhaps brought glory to the community.