

20 die in Rivers boat accident

**From Victor Edozie,
Port Harcourt**

About twenty persons including children were feared dead in a boat mishap along the Andoni-Bonny coastal waters in Rivers State.

Although details of the incident were still sketchy as at the time of filing this report, the accident was said to involve two passenger boats plying the routes.

Most of the victims were said to be from Ngo town, Ataba, and Isiama communities in the Andoni Local Government Area of the state.

The Chairman of 'Obolo Youths Coalition', Bonny LGA chapter, Gogo Obolo said the passengers were returning from Ngo town in Andoni LGA to Bonny Island when the unfortunate accident happened.

The youth leader who expressed worry that none of the victims have been recovered, urged the Chairman of Andoni Local Government Council, Chief Erastus Awortu and his counterpart in Bonny LGA to expedite action

to recover the bodies of the victims and extend a hand of support to their families.

"The Andoni people residing in Bonny Local Government Area received the shocking news of our brothers and sisters involved in a boat accident while returning from the Christmas celebrations.

"While we pray that the rescue effort yields success to reduce the pain, we employ the Andoni Local Government Chairman, Chief Erastus Awortu and his counterpart in Bonny LGA, Dame Anengi Barasua to visit the family of the victims in this trying period," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Andoni LGA, Chief Awortu, who also confirmed the boat mishap said he had dispatched a rescue team to the area immediately after he received the distress call, which led to the rescue of some persons.

Awortu in a statement yesterday commiserated with the families of those who lost their lives in the unfortunate accident and promised to take over the medical bills of those

rescued.

He however warned people and residents of Andoni to stop embarking on night journeys on the sea and asked boat operators to always comply strictly with safety rules.

Meanwhile, Governor Siminalayi Fubara has expressed grief over the unfortunate incident and assured that his administration will continue to work towards ensuring that travelling on the sea routes becomes safer for travellers around the riverine communities.

The governor in a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media, Boniface Onyedi, condoled with the affected families and the victims of the mishap.

The governor said, "It is indeed a very unfortunate and sad incident and we pray that God shall give all of them the strength to bear the loss and speedy recovery to those who survived.

"As a government, we will continue to work to ensure that such threats against safe travelling on our sea routes are tackled."