

29 Die In Niger Boat Mishap



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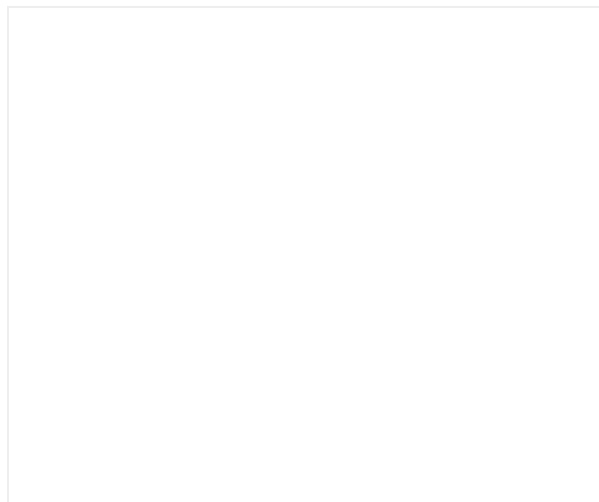


Twenty-nine people have been confirmed dead in a boat mishap at the Malale riverfront in Borgu Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State on Tuesday.

Daily Trust gathered that the boat, carrying 90 passengers, departed Tugan Sule in Shagunu Ward of Borgu LGA and was en route to Dugga for a condolence visit.



Sources said the victims included women and children.



So far, 29 bodies have been recovered, 50 passengers rescued, while two remain missing.

The Director-General of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), Abdullahi Baba Arah, confirmed the incident to Daily Trust.

The Area Manager of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), Akapo Adeboye, also confirmed the mishap to our correspondent via telephone.

Arah said, “NSEMA received a report of a boat mishap at Gausawa community in Malale Ward of Borgu LGA. Our desk officer, who led the search and rescue operations, confirmed that the boat took off from Tugan Sule in Shagunu Ward with 90 passengers on board, including women and children, heading to Dugga for a condolence visit.

“The incident occurred on September 2, 2025, at about 11.30am. It was attributed to overloading and a collision with a tree stump. As at the time of filing this report, 29 bodies have been recovered, 50 passengers rescued alive, while two were still missing.

“Search and rescue operations are ongoing for possible recovery of the missing persons.”

Previous incidents

On July 27, 2025 — less than two months earlier — a similar mishap claimed 18 lives at the Zumba riverfront in Shiroro LGA of the state.

The passenger boat, which carried 43 people, 60 bags of paddy rice, three cows, and two rams, had departed Guni in Munya LGA en route Zumba weekly market when it struck a tree log and capsized.

NIWA's Area Manager, Adeboye, told Daily Trust that 18 people died in the incident, with 15 bodies recovered and three still missing. He added that 26 others, who were wearing life jackets, survived.

“The passengers left Shayita village for Kwata market in Zumba, Shiroro LGA, with goods worth millions of naira. The boat sank on July 26, 2025. A team from NIWA's Niger/Kwara Area office conducted search and rescue operations.

“Eighteen people died, 13 bodies were recovered, while 26 passengers wearing life jackets survived. Surveillance was also set up to arrest the boat driver,” he said.

During the Zumba tragedy, Adeboye stressed that survivors were only those who wore life jackets.

He explained that the accident occurred barely eight days after NIWA carried out a sensitisation campaign at the Zumba riverfront, advising boat operators and passengers to comply with water transport safety regulations such as wearing life jackets and using passenger manifests.

Adeboye noted that boat mishaps in Niger State had drastically reduced in the past year due to consistent sensitisation and enforcement of safety measures across water transport hubs.

He stressed that achieving zero mishaps would only be possible if safety rules were strictly observed, including the use of life jackets, avoiding night travel, preventing overloading, and ensuring boats were in good condition.

According to him, NIWA, in collaboration with stakeholders, has continued to monitor boat operations across riverfronts in Niger State to enforce compliance with safety measures.

He insisted that all passengers in the Zumba incident would have survived if they had worn life jackets, adding that the gear could also save lives during bandit attacks if victims fell into the river.

“This riverfront in Shiroro LGA is one of the most strategic in Nigeria as it connects many places, including Kaduna State. We are distributing life jackets to boat operators and passengers while encouraging them to buy and use them to safeguard lives and property.

“In Niger State, boat mishaps have reduced significantly. This year, only one mishap occurred in the Gbajibo axis.

“This progress is due to sustained sensitisation and enforcement of safety rules, carried out in collaboration with the Civil Defence Corps, Marine Police, and NIWA marshals. So far, 3,700 life jackets have been distributed across riverfronts by the Federal Ministry of Marine Economy, with more expected. We cannot tolerate disregard for safety rules, particularly the mandatory use of life jackets,” he said.

Between January and September 2025, no fewer than 56 lives have been lost in five boat accidents in Niger State.

Four incidents occurred between January and July in Shiroro LGA, claiming 27 lives, while the Malale mishap in Borgu LGA accounted for 29 deaths.

In July 2025, Vice Chairman of the Boat Owners and Freshwater Users Association in Niger State, Dahiru Ango, told Daily Trust that at least nine lives had been lost in three separate boat mishaps in Shiroro LGA since January.

He explained that in most cases, sunken boats were never recovered from the riverbed.

While the Shiroro accidents were largely attributed to collisions with tree logs, the Malale incident was blamed on overloading.

On April 9, 2025, another tragedy struck Sokun Village in Lapai LGA, when a passenger boat capsized on the River Niger.

Daily Trust learnt that several passengers, mostly traders, died in the accident.

The victims had departed Bugge Village in Kogi State, heading to Sokun in Niger with over 200 bags of paddy rice, when the boat capsized due to cloudy weather and a strong windstorm.

A review of events by Daily Trust revealed that between September 2024 and July 2025, no fewer than 93 people, including women and children, lost their lives in boat mishaps across Shiroro, Mokwa, Katcha, and Lapai LGAs.

The deadliest of the incidents occurred on October 1, 2024, when 44 Maulud celebrants drowned at Gbajibo in Mokwa LGA.

The victims had departed the Mundi community en route to Gbajibo for a Maulud celebration organised by the Hausa community leader there, but their boat capsized around 8pm.

We need more life jackets – Boat drivers

Although NIWA claimed to have distributed hundreds of life jackets across Niger State's riverfronts, boat operators insist they remain inadequate.

Hassan Abubakar, a boat operator in Shiroro LGA, told Daily Trust that the life jackets provided by NIWA and other government agencies were insufficient.

Abubakar, who has been ferrying traders and farmers to Zumba market for 27 years, recounted a near-death experience when his boat capsized without passengers on board.

He said he owned only two life jackets, which he and his assistants wore, leaving passengers unprotected.

“I had a mishap about two years ago, but no life was lost. I was with my boy and some goods when my boat capsized. I own only four life jackets, given to me by NIWA. They promised to provide more, but we have yet to receive them. I usually carry about 50 passengers, but with only four life jackets, who do I give them to?” he lamented.