

# Five siblings among victims of Rivers boat accident

**F**IVE children were among victims of the boat accident, which occurred in Rivers State on Tuesday night.

The father of the children, Pastor Promise Festus, from Ngo Town in Andoni Local Government of Rivers State, lamented that his five children were among the victims of the boat accident, which happened along Andoni-Bonny waterways.

Festus, who said his world was finished, appealed to Governor Siminalayi Fubara and the chairman of his local government, Dr. Erastus Awortu, to assist him.

Explaining the accident in a viral video, Festus said: "I went to celebrate Christmas with my people. So, while returning home on January 8, I loaded people, who had no transport fare, with my family. Unfortunately our boat had an accident in front of the LNG, where there was no rescue. About 11 people died and among the deceased were my five children."

Rivers State Government and Andoni Council have

## • Fubara, council boss, others mourn

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been thrown into mourning, following the death of about 20 people in the boat accident.

Although details of the accident were sketchy at press time, it was gathered that the accident involved two boats.

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

Governor Siminalayi Fubara expressed his deepest grief over the accident, describing it as unfortunate.

The governor, in a statement signed by his Special Assistant, Media, Boniface Onyedi, sympathised with the bereaved families.

He said his administration would continue to work to ensure safer water transportation.

He said: "I commiserate and condole with families of the victims of the boat accident that led to loss of lives, and near death experienced by our brothers and sisters that were

involved in the accident.

"It is indeed a very unfortunate and sad incident and we pray that God will give them the strength to bear the loss and speedy recovery to those who survived.

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

The Chairman of Andoni Local Government, Dr. Awortu, confirmed the boat accident, saying over 20 persons were feared dead.

He said: "We received with rude shock and deep pain, a disturbing report that over 20 persons from Andoni are feared dead in a boat accident involving two Andoni/Bonny-bound boats, which occurred within the Andoni waterways on Tuesday.

"Upon receiving the sad development, we immediately dispatched our team to join the first responders on rescue mission on the scene of the accident in a bid to salvage the situation,"

Awortu said they were

monitoring the situation to offer further support, "especially to give the survivors necessary medical attention and recover the remains of the dead from the sea."

He said: "Our hearts go out to the families and communities of victims of this disaster, especially Ngo Town, Ataba, Isiana and other communities, whose loved ones were involved in the boat accident.

"We share in their pain and trauma, our prayers and thoughts are with them in this moment of grief. We will do whatever we can as a local government to reduce the burden of grief of the bereaved families and communities.

"While we bemoan the boat accident, which occurred at a time our people were still basking in the mood of a successful festive season in Andoni, we call on operators of water transportation in Andoni to ensure strict compliance by passengers to safety rules.

"We warn boat operators to desist from embarking on night journey."