

Boat accident: Police recover 14 bodies

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THE Rivers State Police Command has recovered 14 bodies from the scene of a boat accident that occurred at Abonnema Wharf in Port Harcourt on Sunday.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, who confirmed this, said that she was not sure of the whereabouts of the boat driver whom some claimed had been arrested by the police.

Our correspondent learnt that 10 persons, including the boat driver and the owner, who apparently were

good swimmers, survived the accident.

Six girls and eight boys between the ages of four and eight were drowned.

Seven of the victims were members of the same family, while two others were from another family.

The boat was coming from a chieftaincy ceremony when the engine failed.

Designed to carry a maximum of 12 persons, including the driver, the boat was loaded with 24 passengers, besides crates of drinks and other goods.

An eyewitness told our correspondent that he was at Buguma, the headquarters of Asari Toru Local Gov-

ernment Area, when he and others heard a noise.

He said that the people went to the direction of the noise and discovered that it was the drowning passengers that were crying out for help.

"We got there late and we could only help a few of them while others had been drowned before our arrival," he said.

He blamed the boat owner for operating without a life jacket and allowing the driver to overload.

The tragedy has thrown Buguma into mourning as sympathisers throng the homes of the bereaved to condole with them.