

Six fleeing villagers feared dead in Niger boat accident

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Enyioha Opara, Minna

No fewer than six persons were feared dead on Thursday as a canoe carrying fleeing villagers drowned at Gurmana river in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

The victims include three women and three children.

Saturday PUNCH learnt that the villagers fled the community when they learnt of banditry attacks in the adjoining villages.

They boarded some canoes to cross the river to other villages to escape the banditry attacks.

It was gathered that one of the canoes capsized when they had almost reached their destination.

The incident was confirmed by the Co-convenor of Concerned Shiroro Youths, Sani Kokki, who said that villagers now fled their homes once they heard of attacks in nearby villages.

He said, “The incident occurred last night (Thursday). A canoe conveying locals who were fleeing from banditry attacks capsized. Some of the passengers onboard drowned.

“As a proactive measure, the victims, upon hearing about the bandits attacking adjoining villages, decided to run for their dear lives but alas, they met their untimely death while trying to escape.

“Unfortunate incidents of this nature happened in the past and some people’s lives were claimed.”

Kokki said the search of the victims by volunteer rescuers, divers and fishermen had begun, adding that the bodies of the drowned victims had yet to be found.

“I witnessed the search efforts at Gurmana riverbank, the scene of the incident, and as of this time (Thursday), none of the bodies of the drowned victims has been found but rescuers are determined to discover their corpses,” he said.

The Director-General of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency, Ibrahim Inga, confirmed the incident, saying that search-and-rescue operation was ongoing.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Wasiu Abiodun, could not be reached for comments at the time of filing this report.