

Eight die in Delta canoe accident

Eight people were feared dead in a passenger canoe accident in the early hours of yesterday at Omeluigboma, near Oko, in Oshimili South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Omeluigboma and Oko communities are situated by the bank of River Niger.

During the rainy season, the tributaries of the River Niger usually overflow, causing major flooding in the communities.

The only means of transportation for the residents to connect other communities, including Asaba, Onitsha and environs, during the rainy season, is via canoes.

Mr. Sylvanus Ejezie, who resides in Omeluigboma, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that a canoe capsized, while ferrying passengers, leading to the death of the eight passengers.

Ejezie, who is the chairman, Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria, Delta State chapter, said divers in the community immediately swung into action but only recovered four bodies.

According to him, the deceased included three women and a man.

Ejezie said that the incident occurred when the canoe capsized in flood water, while transporting passengers from Omeluigboma to the Onitsha-Asaba Expressway.

He said: "We woke up this morning (yesterday) to see this unfortunate incident, which was caused by flood waters currently rising and getting turbulent due to the overflowing of the River Niger.

"We jumped into the river on a rescue mission, we recovered bodies of four passengers, while all efforts to find the remaining four were fruitless.

"As I speak with you, we have lost hope. So, we are hoping that later in the day or Wednesday their bodies will float on water in order to be recovered."

Ejezie said that a rescue team from the community had been placed on standby to watch and comb everywhere for the missing bodies.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Onome Onovwakpoye, confirmed the incident.

She said: "Efforts were being made to recover the remaining bodies."