

Female Corps Member, Pregnant Woman, Five Others Drown in Bayelsa

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Olusegun Samuel in Yenagoa

A female corps member and a pregnant woman have been confirmed among the passengers that drown in a boat mishap on Saturday, in Bayelsa waterways.

The tragic incident which occurred between Otuan and Ayama communities of Southern Ijaw Local Government area, threw the communities into mourning.

Among the victims was a mother with her two kids and a 70-year-old Otuan Chief and father to a journalist in the State, Chief Lucky Daniels.

The boat and the corpses of the victims were still missing as at the time of this report with rescue and search efforts ongoing at Ayama Community.

Findings revealed that the boat with a capacity to carry 15 passengers, rammed into a barrier while trying to berth close to Ayama community.

It was gathered that the afternoon rain storm, which made all the passengers covered themselves with Tarpaulin and reduce visibility may have contributed to the disaster.

Mr. Domo Timi, a journalist, whose father was one of the victims of the accident, told THISDAY on telephone that his father was involved and rescue teams have been dispatched to check the scene for possible rescue.

He, however, expressed confidence of more survivors due to the fact that most passengers were putting on life jackets.

The elected Chairman of the Maritime Union in Otuan Community, Joseph Shedrack, told newsmen that the boat driver, Lucky Christopher, who survived the accident have been detained by the Police Unit in Ayama over allege reckless driving.

"I was chairman of the Union but some persons who claimed to know more than themselves have been taking charge of the Otuan Unit. If I had been around, I would not have allowed the loading of the boat due to poor visibility and bad weather."

"Those claiming to be acting allowed such trip. I was told a corps member, two children and a woman died. Even the Special Adviser on Security to the Governor have called me," he said.

The State Chairman of the Maritime Union, Ipigansi Ogoniba, however told our correspondent that six persons have been confirmed missing and dead.

"Six persons died. When the boat got to Ayama, it had a mishap. One corpse was recovered and handed to the family for proper burial. While three adults and three children were still missing or probably dead."

On the identity of the Corps member involved in the boat disaster, Comrade Ogoniba said the authorities of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has been contacted through the Community Liaison Officer (CLO).

When contacted, the State Public Relations Officer of the NYSC, Mathew Ngobua, confirmed the accident, saying they were making efforts to identify the Corps member.

He said: "We got the information and the State Coordinator and other staff left the Orientation and went to the place. The State Coordinator told me that the corps member's name is said to be on the passenger manifest and the said corps member is not at the lodge.

"However, we will make a detail report after the search and rescue or when the body is recovered.

"The NYSC will make an official brief when the body is sighted and properly identified."

The Spokesman of the Bayelsa State Police Command, Asanim Butswat, also confirmed the incident but said he is yet to be properly briefed on the number of casualties and what led to the accident.