

How 5 mourners drowned in Aba River



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By Ugochukwu Alaribe

Five persons drowned at the Aba River at Umunkama village, Ovom Amasaa community, Obingwa council area, Abia state, after their canoe capsized while attempting to cross the river.

Community sources disclosed that the victims were on their way to a burial ceremony in Umunkama Village, Ugwunagbo council area. The Umunkama community is divided by the Aba River and is located in both Obingwa and Ugwunagbo council areas.

Eyewitnesses told Vanguard that the wooden canoe capsized when they were halfway to the Ugwunagbo side of the river, plunging those onboard into the river. Attempts by local divers to rescue the victims were unsuccessful, as the five passengers drowned in the depths of the river.

Vanguard gathered that there would have been more victims if some of the team's youths had missed the canoe.

The deceased were identified as two young men from Umuejea Village, two from Okuenyi Village in Ntighauzo and one from Akpaa Mbato, all communities in the Obingwa council area.

One of the people who missed boarding the boat, Hon. Ogbonna Nwanmuo, said he stopped to ease himself on the way and arrived when the canoe had left.

The chairman of Obingwa Council, Hon. Maxwell Nwadike confirmed the incident, sympathized with the victims' families, and pledged that his administration would make recommendations to the state government after visiting the scene of the incident.

Reacting to the incident, the National Secretary of the Church of God Seventh Day Nigeria, Evangelist Keshi Ukaegbu, who hails from the area, called on the federal and state governments to build a bridge across the Aba River to connect the Ugwunagbo council area and protect lives and properties.

He said the Epomiri and Umunkama villages across the river had been a trade route since the colonial era and urged the authorities to open the area to promote trade and tourism.

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“The government should build a bridge across the river at Umunkama and Epomiri villages. Umunkama village has their kith and kin across the river in Obingwa and Ugwunagbo LGAs. We cannot continue to lose lives to avoidable deaths. The area has been a trade route between the Obingwa and Ugwunagbo communities and even the Ukwu people across the river. A bridge is long overdue across the river.