



MARINE ACCIDENT REPORT

Marine/2024/08/11/P/002

Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau

Report of an accident involving a wooden canoe which occurred along River Rima by Dundaye Village, Wamakko Local Government Area (LGA), Sokoto State on 11 August 2024.



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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATION USED IN THIS REPORT

h	Hour(s)
LGA	Local Government Area
m	Meter(s)
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NIWA	National Inland Waterways Authority
NSIB	Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau
PFD	Personal flotation device
SEMA	State Emergency Management Agency



INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) became aware of the accident through mainstream and social media on 11 August 2024. Investigators from NSIB Kano Regional Office arrived in Sokoto the next day in the evening to commence the investigation into the circumstances of the accident in accordance with the Nigerian Safety Investigation (Establishment) Act 2022.

NSIB Investigators visited the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Sokoto Operations Center on 13 August 2024 to enquire about the accident.

The NSIB Investigators, alongside operatives of the NEMA Sokoto operations centre, visited the village head of Dundaye, who directed them to relevant eyes witnesses, including the Driver, some survivors of the accident and the people involved in the search and rescue operation. The team later visited the accident scene.

Information contained in this Report is based on the preliminary assessment of the accident and witness accounts/statements gathered during the visit to the accident site.



SYNOPSIS

According to an eyewitness, on 11 August 2024 at about 09:28 h, a wooden canoe departed Dundaye Riverbank with the Driver and 20 male passengers, including elderly persons, youths, and children. The Canoe was to convey the passengers across the River Rima to their farms at Fadama.

It was reported that barely two minutes into the journey, the Wooden Canoe encountered a strong current which splashed a large volume of water into the Canoe. The passengers of the Wooden Canoe became terrified and shifted to one side of the Canoe, following which the Canoe capsized. Five occupants were fatally injured, and 16 were rescued alive, including the Driver.



1.0 FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1 Narrative

According to an eyewitness, on 11 August 2024 at about 09:28 h, a wooden canoe departed Dundaye Riverbank with the Driver and 20 passengers (18 Males and two Females), including elderly people, youths, and children. The Canoe was to convey the passengers across the River Rima to their farms at Fadama. Earlier reports indicated that 35 persons boarded the Canoe. However, later in the day, it was confirmed that only the Driver and 20 persons boarded the Canoe.

According to eyewitness accounts, at about 09:30 h, the wooden canoe encountered a strong current, which splashed a large volume of water into it. The passengers of the wooden canoe became terrified and shifted to one side of the Canoe, following which the Canoe capsized.

An eyewitness driving another Wooden Canoe in the vicinity rushed to the scene and rescued some occupants. It was reported that 16 persons were rescued, including the Driver; one body was recovered, while four persons were missing at the time.

The accident occurred at about 09:30 h.



Figure 1: The accident Wooden Canoe



Figure 2: A view of the shore from the location of the accident



Figure 3: Dundaye Riverbank

1.2 Canoe particulars

Boat name:	Not applicable
Owner:	Not available
NIWA numbering:	Not available
Construction:	Made from wood
Year of build:	Not available
Length of boat:	7.95 meters
Gross tonnage:	Not applicable
Minimum safe manning:	Not applicable
Authorized cargo:	Not applicable



The Canoe was recovered without any damage, and normal operations continued immediately after the occurrence.

Provisions for life jackets and other safety gear were not made on the Canoe.

1.3 Voyage particulars

Port of departure:	Dundaye Canoe riverbank
Destination port:	Fadama, Across the River
Type of voyage:	Passenger/Cargo
Cargo information:	Not available
Manning:	One Canoe Driver

1.4 Marine Casualty information

Date and time:	11 August 2024 at about 09:30 h
Type of occurrence:	Accident
Location of occurrence:	About 82m from the riverbank
Injuries/ fatalities:	5 Fatalities
Damage/environmental impact:	None
Persons onboard:	21 persons, including the Driver

1.5 The Wooden Canoe

The Canoe was constructed from wood and had a capacity of about 20 people. The Canoe was not registered with the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), Nigeria's regulator of inland waterways transportation.

1.6 The Canoe Driver

The Canoe Driver is an adult male Nigerian who has no formal qualification or training to operate the Canoe.

1.7 Nigerian Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA)

The National Inland Waterways Authority was established by the NIWA Act, CAP N47LFN 2004 and Inland Waterways Transportation Regulations, 2023.

NIWA is the organization responsible for the regulation of the activities of boat navigating in the inland waterways of Nigeria with the following objectives:

- a) To improve and develop inland waterways for navigation.*
- b) Provide an alternative mode of transportation for the evacuation of economic goods and persons*
- c) To execute the objectives of the national transport policy as they concern inland waterways.*

The Authority has, among others, the following functions:

- 1) Provide regulations for inland navigation.*
- 2) Ensure the development of infrastructural facilities for a national inland waterways network connecting the creeks and the rivers with the economic centers using the river-ports as nodal points for intermodal exchange.*
- 3) Ensure the development of indigenous technical and managerial skills to meet the challenges of modern inland waterways transportation.*
- 4) Issue and control licenses for inland watercraft and shipyard operators.*
- 5) Grant licenses to private inland waterway operators.*

1.7.1 Duties of Boat Master/Canoe Driver

Excerpt from NIWA regulations;



(1) There shall be a Boatmaster for the vessel, assembly of floating material or pusher of the vessel in a pushed convoy.

(2) A Boatmaster shall always be on board a vessel underway and onboard floating equipment when the equipment is in use.

(3) A Boatmaster shall possess the relevant qualifications as specified in the manning list for inland river vessels provided in the Twelfth Schedule to these Regulations.

(4) When underway, a vessel shall be steered by not less than one qualified person not below 18 years of age.

The Particulars of a Vessel/Boat

12.— (1) A vessel under these Regulations shall carry —

(a) a certificate of registration;

(b) a ship's articles or crew list;

(c) a ship's log; (d) a load line certificate, where applicable;

(e) an operational permit issued by NIWA, and

(f) any other document relating to navigation required under international conventions or agreements

1.7.1 Life-Saving Appliances

According to information from NIWA, when navigating along the waterways, all boat Passengers should be equipped with the following Life-Saving Appliances

(a) lifejackets

(b) life buoys

(c) life rafts

(d) fire extinguishers



1.7.2 Lifejackets

A lifejacket, also known as a personal flotation device (PFD), keeps the user afloat in the water. NIWA regulations require that *vessels be equipped with lifejackets when navigating along the waterways.*

1.8 Search, Rescue and Recovery

State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), received notification from General Manager Rima Radio through their emergency line at about 10:00 h, who resided in Dundaye.

A search, rescue, and recovery team comprising local divers, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), and the Nigerian Red Cross Society arrived at the scene and commenced a search for the missing persons. However, the search, rescue, and recovery operations were called off for the day due to rainfall.

The search, rescue and recovery operations resumed the following day, 12 August 2024. One body was recovered at about 14:30 h, another body was recovered at about 15:15 h, and a third body was recovered at about 17:30 h. All three recovered bodies were found not far away from the site of the accident. The bodies were handed over to the families of the victims. The search, rescue and recovery operations were called off for the day.

On 13 August 2024, at about 13:30 h, the search, rescue and recovery team recovered the last missing body, which brought the operation to a final stop.

2.0 ANALYSIS

2.1 The Accident

As was reported, just about two minutes into the journey, while the Driver was padding the Canoe to convey passengers to their destination across River Rima, the Wooden Canoe encountered a strong current with a large volume of water rushing into the Canoe. Hence, the occupants of the Canoe might have been scared, and in what seemed to be a reflex reaction to the situation, the majority of the occupants were reported to have suddenly shifted towards one side of the Canoe. Consequently, the sudden shift of passengers to one side of the Canoe affected the distribution of load in the Canoe, resulting in loss of stability, which caused its overturn and throwing of all the occupants into the river.

There was no evidence that the Driver or any of the occupants of the wooden Canoe wore personal floatation devices (lifejackets) as a safety measure that would have been handy in an emergency like the one the occupants were subjected to in this case. Had they worn the lifejackets, coupled with the prompt arrival of help, all the five deceased passengers would have survived the accident.

The majority of the occupants who survived the accident could be attributable to the prompt response and rescue efforts by the bystanders who rushed to the scene as the Canoe capsized, thereby rescuing 16 of the occupants while five of them drowned.

2.2 The Canoe Driver

As required by NIWA regulations, a Boat master (Canoe Driver) shall possess the relevant qualifications as specified in the manning list for inland river vessels. However, the Driver has no formal qualification or training to operate the Canoe, which contravenes the regulations' provisions.

Earlier reports indicated that 35 persons boarded the Canoe. However, later in the day, it was confirmed that only the Driver and 20 persons boarded the Canoe.

Had the Driver provided the passenger manifest on board the Canoe, the earlier reported figures about the number of persons would have been easily identified or



known. The confusion about the exact number of occupants of the wooden Canoe that ensued at an early stage of the accident would have been avoided if the passenger manifest had been available.

2.3 Lifejacket

A lifejacket (or personal floatation device) is one of the most important pieces of safety equipment that must be carried and worn by canoe occupants to keep them afloat for a longer duration when they find themselves in water. This greatly increases their chance of survival before rescue comes their way.

Lifejackets were neither carried on the wooden Canoe nor worn by its occupants. Canoe operators are very unwilling to provide lifejackets to their passengers. The reason usually advanced for this culture of unsafe attitude is that they consider lifejackets to be expensive and difficult to use. Another factor is that the local communities lack knowledge or awareness of the importance of lifejackets and their safety benefits for occupants of sailing canoes.

It is also evident that the local and national authorities did not provide the necessary safety enlightenment to the operators of commercial canoe transport services on the safe operation of canoes and the importance of using personal floatation devices by canoe occupants. Had all the occupants of the ill-fated canoes worn lifejackets, this would have gone a long way in increasing the chances of survival. Thus, the five deceased passengers would have remained afloat after the Canoe capsized, thereby surviving the accident.



3.0 FINDINGS

1. The Driver has no qualification or formal training to operate the Canoe
2. The Canoe was not registered with NIWA
3. The Canoe was constructed from wood
4. There were 21 occupants of the wooden Canoe, including a Driver
5. 16 occupants were rescued
6. Five of the occupants of the wooden Canoe were deceased; their bodies recovered from the river and handed over to their families
7. The occupants of the wooden canoe were not provided with personal floatation devices (lifejackets) and other safety gear.
8. The wooden Canoe was recovered undamaged.
9. There was no manifest of the occupants of the wooden Canoe
- 10 The Wooden Canoe capsized at about 82 meters from Dundaye Riverbank.



4.0 SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Safety Recommendation 006-2024

The National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) should expedite the implementation of safety recommendations 001-2024, 002-2024, 003-2024, and 004-2024.

4.2 Safety Recommendation 007-2024

The National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), in collaboration with the affected States and Local Governments across the country, should establish a policy framework that integrates local authorities in the dissemination of safety information and safety gear to communities along the nation's inland waterways.