

Concern. Africa's second deepest lake has become a deathtrap for many residents in Kigezi sub-region.

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RUBANDA. A 25-year-old woman and her 11-month-old baby last Friday evening drowned when the dugout canoe they were sailing in capsized in the middle of Lake Bunyonyi, as they crossed to attend a burial of their relative.

The Rubanda District police commander, Mr Ramathan Tai, identified the deceased mother as Evalyn Kukundakwe and the baby only as Lucky, all residents of Bishanje Village in Bushura Parish, Bubare Sub-county.

Mr Tai said the deceased was

sailing from Bufundi Sub-county in Kabale District to attend burial of her in-law, Evalyn Kyomigisha.

"It was around 8pm in the evening when the dugout canoe capsized because of strong evening winds and water waves. The other three people were rescued by other people who were sailing in a motorboat following them and they are now okay," he said.

"It was a sad moment to have three people from the same family being buried on the same day," he added.

The lake has become a deathtrap for residents that use the dugout canoes.

RECENT INCIDENTS

February 26, 2017. Gracean Tibanyenda and her daughter-in-law only identified as Stella died after the canoe they were sailing in capsized.

August 20, 2016. Five people from the same family drowned in the lake after a locally-made boat they were sailing in capsized as they returned from attending a wedding of their relative in Kamuganguzi Sub-county, Kabale District.

Following the water accidents, authorities around the lake issued a ban on use of dugout canoes but the residents opposed the ban, arguing that using motorboats is expensive.

Appeal

Local leaders have since appealed to President Museveni to fulfill the pledge of donating to them a ferry he promised during the 2015/2016 presidential campaigns.

However, Kabale District chairman Patrick Besigye Keihwa yesterday said whereas a ferry on Lake Bunyonyi is important, it might not satisfy the daily transport needs of the local people that want

to cross to the other side of the lake for digging in their gardens.

"What we need is constant sensitisation of the local residents on being careful while moving on water by wearing life jackets, avoiding moving on the lake during bad weather and other general safety measures such as avoiding to travel during the night," Mr Keihwa said.

Lake Bunyonyi is considered to be the second deepest lake in Africa with a surface elevation of about 1,962 metres, occupying an area of about 60 square kilometres, and maximum depth, ranging between 44 and 900 metres deep.