

Multiple kerosene explosions leave scores dead

Abdullahi Yahaya Bello, Kano & Bahiru Abdullahi, Port Harcourt

ADULTERATED kerosene has been claiming several lives across Nigeria. Malam Isyaku Bashiru, 40, of Indabawa Quarters in Kano, is still in a state of shock over the tragedy that befell his family two weeks ago. Kerosene exploded on five of his children in his sitting room, killing three, burning two and injuring his younger brother.

Malam Bashiru told *Weekly Trust* that he was the one who bought the kerosene and handed it to one of his children in the evening of that fateful day. "I was told that there was no kerosene at home so I bought some after the Magrib prayers and gave it to one of my children. Five minutes later, I heard screams. Little did I know that it was my house that was on fire. Before I got there, good Samaritans were already putting out the fire and struggling to rescue my children trapped inside."

What compounded Bashir's problem was that the children, out of confusion, rushed inside the room when the sitting room caught fire instead of rushing out. He said: "That made the rescue effort difficult because people were struggling to put out the fire in the sitting room before gaining access to the room. My little boy Muhammad, 4, died instantly. But 7-year-old Fatima and Abduljabbar, 6 later died in the hospital. Hajara is still in the hospital while my brother, Umar and my other son, Muhammad Sanni, have been discharged. I later learnt that one of them was pouring kerosene into the lantern that was already lit and not knowing that the kerosene was adulterated, the lantern and the remaining kerosene in the jerry can exploded in the sitting room."

Malam Bashiru said he has taken the whole thing as fate. "What can I do? This is a very devastating experience but we have to accept fate. We are praying that Allah should give



SOTENYE Meson victim of Kerosene explosion receiving treatment in BMH hospital

my daughter in the hospital quick recovery."

Saleh, the kerosene seller, said he did not know that the kerosene was adulterated. "This whole thing is a rude shock to me. This is the first time this kind of thing has happened. I never knew it was adulterated. I went back to the place I bought it and

the man too said he didn't know anything about the adulteration," he explained.

It would be recalled that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) issues warning to consumers last week that adulterated kerosene is on sale. All efforts to speak to the NNPC in Kano before press time were not successful.

Meanwhile, in Port Harcourt about 20 people are feared dead as a result of suspected kerosene explosion which is believed to be in circulation by unauthorized dealers popularly known as black marketers in different parts of Rivers State. A hospital source told *Weekly Trust* that from November, 2010 to date, 20 persons have lost their lives even though the police command in the state confirmed that five people died as a result of the product.

Within Rivers State alone, the Joint Military Task Force has in 2010 identified over 3,000 illegal refineries on shorelines of many rivers in the state with most of the refineries producing adulterated kerosene.

The Police Public Relation

This whole thing is a rude shock to me. This is the first time this kind of thing has happened. I never knew it was adulterated. I went back to the place I bought it and the man too said he didn't know anything about the adulteration



JOSEPH Ibekwe and mother receiving treatment for kerosene explosion in Port Harcourt



INGIBO Victory Benson another kerosene victim

Officer Rivers State Command, Rita Inoma Abbey in an interview with *Weekly Trust* confirmed the circulation of the adulterated kerosene that have been killing and rendering people homeless. She said, "We are aware of this adulterated product. In fact on Saturday the 5th of February at precisely 11pm we received a distress call of fire outbreak at no 6 Venestar Street in Port Harcourt. When our men got to the place, they discovered that a house was already burnt. The cause of the fire outbreak was adulterated kerosene. Investigation revealed that when the family was about to light up a lamp, it exploded. The victim happened to be a police sergeant, Maxwell Udo. He was admitted in the hospital. His wife, three of his sons and a brother-in-law died, making a total of five deaths. The sergeant is still responding to treatment at the police clinic," she said.

The Permanent Secretary, Rivers State Ministry of Energy, Mr. George Nwolu, in an interview said: "For about a month now we have been witnessing a scarcity

of kerosene in the state. As a result, people are now buying the product from any available source."

A visit by our correspondent of Braith-Wait Memorial Hospital Port Harcourt, where over fourteen patients, all victims of adulterated kerosene explosions where receiving treatment from different degrees of burnt revealed that over 20 people have lost their lives from kerosene explosion recently. Peace Coxson was a mother of four before she lost a child over the week as a result of kerosene explosion. She and her second son, Gift Coxson are presently undergoing treatment.

Another Victim, Ingibo Victory Benson, 17, said: "I was trying to top-up kerosene into a lantern that was on. It exploded and my body caught fire. I was screaming and my aunty ran out and pulled off my singlet, but by then I was already badly burnt." *Weekly Trust* gathered that most of the victims are paying the price for preferring to buy adulterated kerosene simply because it is less expensive.



LATE Abduljabbar Isyaku Bashir



LATE Fatima Isyaku Bashir



LATE Muhammad Isyaku Bashir