

3 dead, many hospitalised from powdery waste in Kaduna

By Ismail Mudashir, Kaduna

What started as a thing of joy is gradually sending the people of Rido village, a neighbouring community of Kaduna Refining and Petrochemical Company (KRPC) to the graves.

Children and animals account for the highest casualty. So far, the community said two of their children have died and many animals too have gone.

Last Sunday, trucks loaded with waste allegedly belonging to KRPC dumped their contents in an open field in Rido community.

Hours later, residents especially women and children thronged there and started picking wood and other things not minding the dust of the powdery substance they were inhaling.

Two days later, the villagers started having respiratory track problems. Even those who did not go to where the waste was dumped were not spared as the breeze blowing around in the community has been contaminated by the waste.

When our correspondent visited the area last Friday, despite the number of casualties so far recorded children were seen rummaging through the powdery waste.

While the villagers are pointing accusing fingers at the management of KRPC for polluting their air and endangering their lives, the management of the refinery says the waste is not theirs.

Speaking to *Sunday Trust*, a nurse identified as Janet Isa who operates a clinic in Rido said from when the waste was dumped she has treated many persons including children and adults.

"This week alone, I have treated over 20 persons both adults and children for vomiting and other things," she said.

Representative of the Village Head Saliyu Yahaya said the waste was dumped by KRPC and that children have died after inhaling dust from the waste.

"It was when the air became hot like pepper as if tear gas was released that we became apprehensive. Two children have

died while many are in hospital. Over 500 chickens in a poultry close to the area have died. We have reported it to the Village Head and he has swung into action," he explained.

Proprietor of the Biams Integrated Farms, Maimuna Isa alleged that the waste was dumped by the contractor engaged by the KRPC management for the evacuation of the industrial waste.

Narrated, "On Monday, we lost 10 chickens, Tuesday we lost another 40 and on Thursday, we lost more than 500 chickens. So we took the chickens to laboratory. It was there we were told that our chickens died of poison and that they died of Chronic Respiratory Disease (CRD).

"The annoying thing is that KRPC is trying to deny culpability after we have found papers with the inscription KRPC at the site.

"My husband supported by other residents intercepted the trucks they used in carrying the waste to the site."

She urged management of KRPC to own up and should immediately evacuate the waste

and save the people and animals in the area.

A resident who lives close to where the waste was dumped, Sani Samson said those that dumped the waste claimed it was the management of KRPC that directed them to offload the waste there.

"I was not around when they came but my wife tried to stop them but they told her that it was KRPC that directed them to do so. My dog that went there died at the weekend.

He said the substance was dumped by 10 trucks. "We don't know it was toxic waste because villagers trooped to the area to pick wood and other valuables. Few days afterwards, those who went started falling sick," he recalled.

Group Public Affairs Officer of KRPC Abdullahi Idris appealed to the villagers to be patience and allow them to investigate those who dumped the waste there.

He said the apprehension of two vehicles by the villagers will assist in tracking those who dumped it.