

# One killed, 2 hospitalised in Ebonyi kerosene explosion

Ogochukwu Anioke, Abakaliki

A THIRTEEN-year-old girl, Chidera Nwoba, was feared dead yesterday during an explosion ignited by kerosene explosion at Mbukobe in Abakaliki, capital of Ebonyi state.

Two others, namely: Chibueze Ugorji, eight-year old from Isukwatu in Abia state and Uche Kalueze, six years old, from Akaeze in Ivo council area of the state were burnt beyond recognition in two other separate incidents and are now in critical conditions at the Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki(FETHA) due to the explosion suspected to have been caused by adulterated kerosene.

It was gathered that the explosions affected three different families who all claimed to have bought the kerosene from the same source, a road side kerosene vendor woman (names withheld).

The vendor, it was also gathered, claimed to have bought the kerosene from a filling station in Abakaliki.

The explosion that led to the death of Chidera, it was gathered, occurred at about 6.45am yesterday as she was trying to light a stove to prepare breakfast for her siblings, which burst into flames and burnt her to death before neighbours could put off the flames.

An eye-witness who spoke to our reporter said that he heard a heavy explosion and rushed out only to see that the house was in flames.

He said, "Before we could put off the fire, the girl had already given up the ghost but she was rushed to hospital where the doctors confirmed her dead."

When The Nation visited the two victims, Uche and Chibueze, at the Federal Teaching hospital Abakaliki where they are still receiving treatment they were lying critically ill with severe pains due to the deep burns they suffered from the kerosene explosion. Mother of one of the victims, Mrs. Ada Kalueze, said that they were in the parlour of their house when power from PHCN went off and she sent her son to go and light the lantern. While the boy was inside the room to light the lantern it blew into flames.

"As I heard the sound of the burst of the lantern, I rushed into the room and saw flames in my room with my three children in the room. I entered the room despite the fire to rescue my children but the fire burnt Uche much because he was directly involved, I was equally burnt on my hands and legs."

"The fire destroyed property in the room but did not spread to other rooms. I was the one who bought the kerosene from one woman who sells kerosene along the street. I met these people in the hospital with the same kerosene explosion case, they said they bought kerosene from the same woman, which I believe was adulterated, but now the woman is claiming that she bought the kerosene from a filling station," she stated.

Police spokesman, DSP Sylvester Igbo, when contacted, said he was yet to be briefed on the incident.