

# Electrocution in Calabar: One time, too many

By HILTON ETAKOH

**J**ULY 6, 2013 is a day residents of Mount Zion and Orok Orok Streets of Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State will not forget in a hurry as yet another live high-tension cable fell off from an electric pole and electrocuted a young lady whose name was given as Ekaete Mathew, a seamstress said to be between the age of 35 and 40.

The late Ekaete woke up soundly on that fateful morning and went to her shop located at 65, Orok Orok Street where she did her sewing business.

She had been on her sewing machine for about three hours doing what she knew best to do, when suddenly, at about 11.30 am, there was pandemonium in the neighbourhood as people scampered and ran helter-skelter from a dangling high-tension cable that came falling from an electric pole.

On seeing the cable dangling just inches away from the entrance to her shop, Ekaete ran out of the shop and tried to escape to a safe place, but before she could go any further, the cable caught up with her, slashed her on the thigh, she immediately fell to the ground and died on the spot.

Within a few minutes, her body had become blackened from the high dose of voltage it received from the cable.

Moments later an ambulance from the Cross River State Emergency Response Centre arrived the scene and took the body away.

Meanwhile, residents of the area who had formed a large crowd at the scene of the incidence, could not hide their shock and bewilderment as they recounted two other previous deaths in the neighbourhood involving a high tension cable.

According to them, the first incidence occurred in May 2012 when a high tension cable fell across the front of a line of shops along Mount Zion road, less than two minutes walk from where Ekaete died. A sales girl in one of the shops who had tried to run out of the shop mistakenly touched the iron bars at the entrance to the shop and was electrocuted.

The other incidence occurred in October 2012, again

**The first incidence occurred in May 2012, when a high tension cable fell across the front of a line of shops along Mount Zion Road, less than two minutes walk from where Ekaete died.**

another high tension cable fell on the roof of a building, less than a minute walk from where Ekaete died, and this time a young man of about 30 was the victim. In all, three people have lost their lives to high tension electrocution in about 14 months, and the residents of Mount Zion and Orok Orok Streets now live in fear of high tension cables, which have become weapons of death.

The residents have called on the PHCN and government to do something to address the menace.

Speaking to *Nigerian Tribune*, **Professor Aboki**, a popular comedian in Calabar, called on the government to use rubber-coated high tension cables for the safety of humans. He said "people cannot continue to die like this, government should try and coat high tension cables so that even when they do fall, they will not kill anyone," he said.

Another resident who gave his name as Uduak said "I will advise the government to run electric cables beneath the ground. That way, there will be minimal cases of electrocution".

In all, PHCN and government are not entirely to blame, given the closeness of most buildings to electric poles and major roads. For instance, all three buildings in the three incidences mentioned above are built almost directly below high tension cables.

The most urgent thing to do would be for government to ensure that people are not allowed to erect buildings less than 10 feet from the roads.

**Ekakoh sent this piece from Calabar.**