

# Tragedy that befell us unbelievable

## -Fathers who lost seven persons to Delta gas fire

Matthew Ochei

Delta State has yet to get over last Friday's gas explosion in which many died and several sustained varying degrees of injury in Agbor in the Ika South Local Government Area of the state.

Buildings, vehicles, motorcycles and other valuable items in the area were destroyed by the fire.

The explosion which started around 5pm was said to have lasted for three hours before the arrival of men of the state fire service. Monday Osadume who lost four persons, Victor Uruakpo whose two children and mother died in the incident including many others are still mourning their dead and loss.

It was gathered that the victims also included those taking pictures of the explosion with their mobiles. Our correspondent who visited the community on Thursday saw bereaved families and sympathisers in a sober mood.

Uruakpa told *Saturday PUNCH* in tears that he had buried his two children on Tuesday while an arrangement was in progress to take his mother's corpse to Imo State for burial.

He said, "I am feeling bad now. I'm confused over what happened to me. I can't believe it. I don't have strength for anything again because no amount of money can return my loved ones to life. My two children; Treasure and Triumph and my mother, Uruakpa Ada, were burnt to death. I buried my children on Tuesday and my mum's corpse would soon be taken to Imo State for burial. My dad was buried on December 28, 2020. It's unfortunate to experience this incident."

He said he was not at home when the incident happened, adding that when he was called and he got home, he was surprised to see his house burning with charred bodies on the ground.

The governor, Ifeanyi Okowa, has visited me. He consoled me and said they would get back to me but

I have yet heard from them. The fire started from a gas plant. It is bad to site gas plants in a residential area. There was a leakage in the gas plant and those who saw it ran away without informing the residents."

Also narrating his ordeal, Osadume said the incident had rendered him helpless after losing four members of his family to the inferno.

He said, "My 58-year-old wife, Mrs Victoria Osadume, my two children, Damilola and Victory aged 13 and 15 years respectively including my grandson, were all burnt to death. The fire started from the gas plant in the area. I was not at home when it started. I was called from where I was and before I could get home, my loved ones had died in the fire. I am confused over everything.

"I don't wish what I am passing through now for my enemies. The governor visited me when he came to the area. I'm no longer the same person. I can't believe what happened to me. But I can't question God."

Mr Sunday Okwuokenye and Mr Felix Akibor lost buildings to the explosion. Okwuokenye said he arrived in Delta from Lagos on Friday to hear the sad news that fire had razed his house.

He stated, "I rushed to my house immediately and saw that everywhere was on fire. The destruction was massive. Many people died and several injured. Many are still in hospital. One of my neighbours lost three persons and the five family members of another one were burnt in the explosion. Four died while one was in the hospital.

"Some motorcyclists were burnt. The fire started from the Osadebe gas plant. The plant was established barely three months ago."

But when the governor visited the scene of the explosion and some families of the victims to sympathise with them on Saturday, he said four persons died and 11 persons suffered burns and were in hospitals for treatment.

The governor, who described the incident as

unfortunate, said the state government would pay the victims' medical bills.

He said that the surviving patients were referred to a specialised centre at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital for the treatment of burns.

He stated, "It was an unfortunate fire incident involving a gas station when the tanker was trying to discharge gas.

"We have visited the place and the victims. We have seen the extent of damage caused by the inferno. We lost four people; three children and a woman.

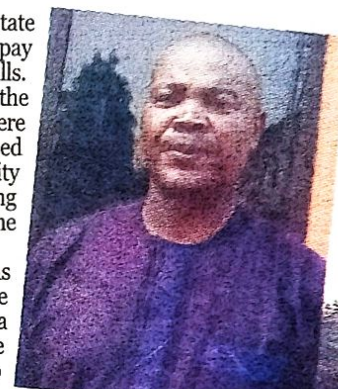
"After my visit to the two families that lost their dear ones, I also visited the Central Hospital, Agbor, where they were initially rushed to with varying degrees of burns ranging from 80 to 90 per cent.

"They were immediately offered medical services even though they wouldn't have been able to attend to them because of the extent of the burns. They have transferred them to the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba and the University of Benin Teaching Hospital.

"I have directed the commissioner for health to make some deposits at the hospitals to enable the victims have a full treatment."

He also promised to liaise with the state assembly to enact a law regulating the siting of gas plants in residential areas.

Our correspondent gathered that about seven persons out of the over 15 in hospital died few days after the governor directed the state Commissioner for Health, Dr Mordi Ononye, to deposit N3m for their treatment.



•Okwuokenye



•Scene of the affected houses and palm plantation

