

Governor Udom Emmanuel (middle), Deputy Governor, Mr. Moses Ekpo (2nd left), Speaker Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Onofiok Luke (left), the State Chief Judge, Justice Stephen Okon and wife during thanksgiving service at Insight Bible Church, Nsikak Eduok Avenue to commemorate the 2016/17 Legal Year.

27 feared dead in A'Ibom over dumpsite odour

From **Joe Effiong**, Uyo

NO fewer than 27 people have reportedly died as a result of inhaling polluted fumes at a dumpsite close to Government House in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Consequently, the state government has promised to halt the dumping of refuse at the site situated at a gully along Old Stadium road.

The latest of such deaths is that of a chief nursing officer in one of the missionary hospitals in Uyo, Ms Irene Umoh, said to have been clinically diagnosed with lungs infection in India and at the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital.

Following the series of

deaths, residents of the area have been forced to abandon their ancestral homes, even as hoodlums and scavengers have taken over the area.

A brother of the late Irene Umoh, Mr. Anthony Umoh lamented that all efforts, including legal action, protests and petitions to the government on the health hazards posed by the dumpsite had been ignored.

He said doctors at Max Healthcare Super Speciality Hospital, India, on examining his late sister traced her ailment to frequent inhalation of toxic substances.

"I took her to India and the doctors diagnosed her of lung infection. The doctors asked us if she worked

in a factory where she was constantly exposed to hazardous substances, or lived in a polluted environment. When we came back to Akwa Ibom State, we also went to Ibom Specialist Hospital, Uyo, where she finally died.

"Apart from my sister, recently we also lost a youth leader, Nsima Udotung; a couple and a number of others. As we speak, the security guard who takes care of this environment has been severely ill."

According to Umoh, the state government only responded when protesters blocked access to the dumpsite, leaving truck loads of refuse all over the state capital.

But the Commissioner for Environment, Dr. Iniobong Essien, said government was working to provide alternative dumpsite far away from the people, along Uyo Village Road.

Essien who commiserated with the deceased families and others affected by the pollutants, said the state government was currently working on a design for a proper waste recycling plant to address the problem.

He said government would soon have stakeholders meeting with residents with a view to administering health intervention and proper health check on those that have been affected by explosion to dump diseases.

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