

Idim Urua Enang stream

Stream of death

At Ibesikpo, it's one month, one death

From Joe Effiong, Uyo

IT was a disaster waiting to happen. And it did. Idim Urua Enang (Urua Enang stream), a hitherto small meandering stream, in the heart of Ibesikpo, Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, has finally begun to swallow the people in anger.

Possibly, the gods in the water are angry; angry because their aquatic shrines or residences have been devastated by combined vices of greed, insensitivity and seeming poverty by the shylock

sand dredgers, the local government authorities, the community or lack of seriousness by the state government.

About four years ago, the stream, which runs through Mbikpong Ikot Edim, Ebereotu, Ikot Ambon and Nung Oku Akpasima, was a peaceful environment that provided locals with a source of drinking water, while its swamps were a rich source of agric produce like palm fruits, raffia palm and other agricultural activities.

Today, the whole areas that the stream has snaked through is a

huge environmental disaster, courtesy of sand dredging which appears to defy the feeble or make-belief effort by the state Ministry of Environment to curb.

While people, both locals and strangers, are now drowning on monthly basis in the hitherto small stream, which used to have only bailey bridges, but has now been turned into a swampy river, the shylock entrepreneurs, the youth, the land owners and even the local government officials are smiling to the bank.

But it is not even cheap to drown

in the Idim Urua Enang. It is an expensive business. Before the corpses are released for burial, certain sacrifices running into thousands of naira have to be carried out by the bereaved families, through a witch doctor or a spiritual consultant.

Among the dead is 17-year old senior secondary school pupil and assistant senior prefect of Ibesikpo Secondary Commercial School, Nung Udoo, Nathaniel Samuel Okon.

"God brought this one child to help me but now he is gone. Ac-

cording to what I was told, he got to the river with two other friends. The two friends jumped into the river while he was only watching, because he did not know how to swim since he was not born here. I was also told that one of the friends pushed him into the water but the friend denied. Some people said he fell off the cliff and other say someone pushed him into the water. I do not know which account to believe. When he was pulled out of the water, he was only in shorts,

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