

Tension in Abia as family of 7 die after eating suya

•Ikpeazu orders investigations

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From **Okey Sampson**, Umuahia

There was palpable tension, yesterday, in Umueze, Umuakanu community in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, after seven people from the same family died after eating the popular barbecue known as suya, with an undisclosed brand of juice drink.

Father of the house whose name was given as Mr. Sunday Jessey, who had gone out earlier in the day, was said to have bought the suya which all the entire family, including four extended family members who

came on holidays, ate.

It was gathered that trouble began for members of the family when a few minutes after eating the suya, suspected to have been poisoned, started vomiting.

A source told Daily Sun that before any help could come the way of the family members, they were all dead, except the wife of Mr. Jessey, Mrs. Ogba Jessey.

While one of their son's survived because he was at school and could not partake in eating of the suya, Mrs Jessey is said to be unconscious and is receiving treatment at the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, and she was unaware that other members of the family were dead.

Daily Sun's investigations, however, revealed that four of the kids who died were actually from Mr. Sunday's former neighbour and friend.

According to the father of the four children, whose name was given as Ikwunze, his former neighbour known as Sunday, who hailed from Item, in Bende Local Government Area of the State had called and asked his children over.

He revealed that this was not unusual as the man, who turned out to be a close family friend, had been doing that over the years since he moved out of their area.

The man reportedly obliged and when his children who were aged 12, 10, nine and three arrived at the friend's home, the friend went out and bought Suya and some juice drinks for the whole family and their guests to eat.

But, unfortunately, after eating the suya and drinking the juice, the whole family didn't wake up yesterday morning, except the wife of Sunday and his first daughter who were critically ill and receiving treatment at the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia.

Brother of the father of the deceased four children, who gave his name as Ken, said his brother called him early yesterday morning to reveal he had no children again.

"When my younger brother called me that he had no child again. I didn't understand what he meant as he has four children who are aged 12, 10, nine and three. I drove down to his place, but met an ambulance and police van driving out."

Confirming the incident, an official of the FMC, Umuahia said the wife of the deceased was the first to be brought to the hospital and was responding to treatment, while seven bodies have been deposited at the hospital's morgue.

Meanwhile, the Abia State Governor, Okezie Ikpeazu, has directed authorities of the relevant medical facility, where the surviving family members were treated and discharged, to ensure a comprehensive autopsy for those who lost their lives.

Commissioner for Information, Chief John Okiyi-Kalu, who confirmed this in a statement, said governor Ikpeazu has fully settled the medical bills of the survivors who had been discharged.