

Official Neglect Causes Students' Death in Taraba

Augustine Osayande reports on how years of neglect and total lack of basic facilities in government-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State have forced students to live such primitive lives, with tragic consequences

Students of the Taraba State College of Education, Jalingo, will never forget Monday June 11. It was a time of sorrow as one of their colleagues got burnt to death in a kerosene lamp explosion, which has become a frequent occurrence in the school. The victim, Miss Ruth Ezekiel, a NCE Part Two student of Agric Education was said to have been studying during the night when ran out of kerosene in her lamp around 6:00am.

An attempt to refill the lamp resulted in explosion that consumed the entire room.

One of her neighbours and student of the college, Fanya Daniel who witnessed the incident said they heard shouts of fire and when other students came out, they saw flames in the round hut Ruth shared with another student, Wolsunya Zanolmi). Yes, a round mud hut inhabited by the rural dwellers in the north. Such is the level that students in the state's schools have been reduced to in the absence of hostel accommodation.

Attempts by the students to put off the fire failed due to lack of water in the area. The students, desperate to save their colleagues quickly pulled the hut down and Zanolmi was rescued, but Ruth was burnt in her bed.

THISDAY checks revealed that two other students, Friday Danladi of the Business Education Department and Japheth Francis of the Animal Health and Production Department at the nearby State College of Agriculture also ended up the Nanty Zion Medical Service Centre following various degrees of burns that they suffered in a similar incident.

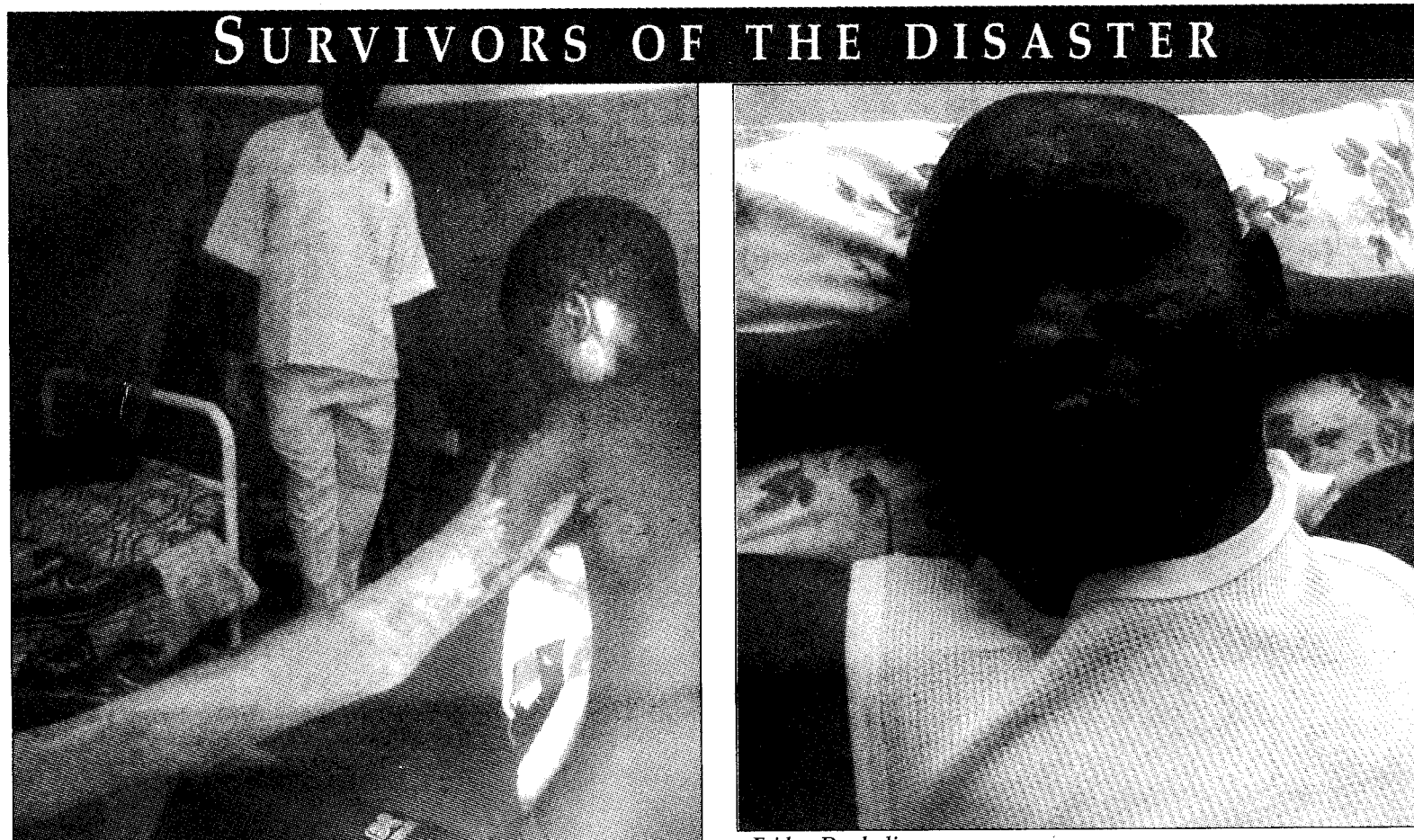
Danladi told THISDAY that he was also reading with a lamp when his kerosene got exhausted and in the process of refilling the lamp, the explosion occurred.

He said his roommates were lucky as they were outside the hut when the incident happened. For Japheth, he was trying to cook after his meal after an evening lecture when his lamp exploded. He said although his roommates were not around, he managed to escape from the hut with fire in his clothes. Of course, he and his room mates lost everything.

The students lamented that they pay as much as N6000.00 as rent for the round huts and in some cases, a hut is shared by as many as four or five students.

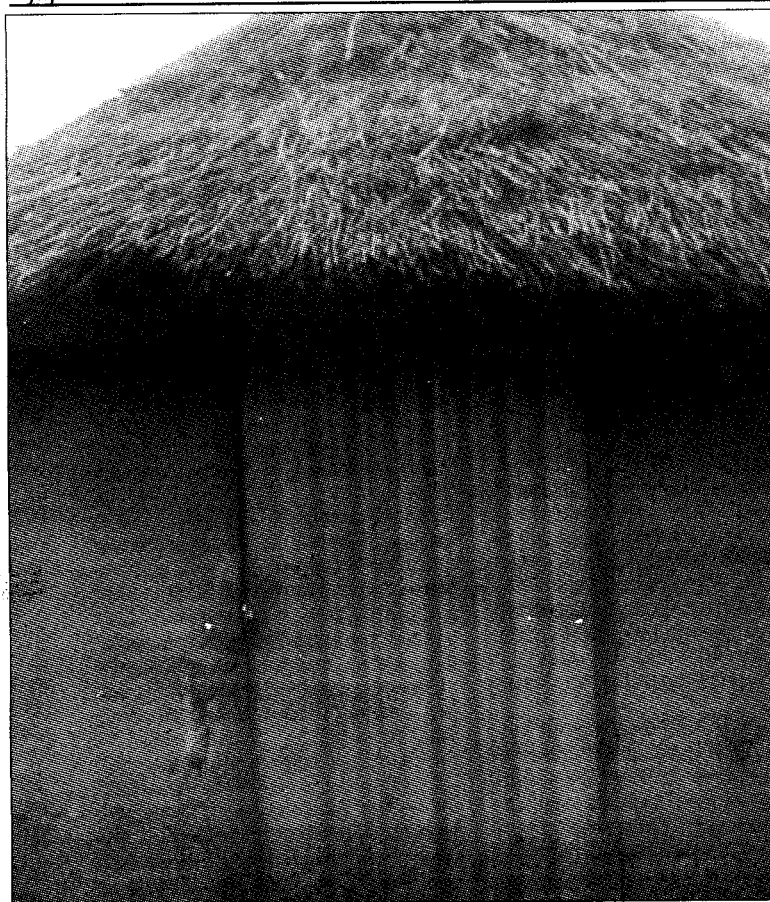
They schools lack hostel, potable water and electricity owing to total neglect by successive administrations in the state. Sources in one of the schools told THISDAY that all the schools have been operating on only internally generated revenue for the years, with nothing coming from the government.

When THISDAY visited the schools, students were seen buying water at the cost of N10.00 for a 25-litre keg, from hawkers for their daily use. The newly inaugurated Student Union President at the



•Japheth Francis

•Friday Danladi



•Typical student hostel in Taraba state College of Education

College of Education, Ruben Akachi appealed to state government to come their aid.

When contacted, the Permanent Secretary of the State

Ministry of Education Mr. Umar Zortor told THISDAY that he had not been officially notified of the

fire incident and Ruth's death. He however described the lack of basic facilities in these schools as something common to various higher institutions in the entire country, adding that the pathetic situation in Taraba was not peculiar.



•Left over of Ruth hostel

ASURI Decries Brain Drain in Research Institutes

The Academic Staff Union of Research Institutions (ASURI) has decried the exodus of research scientists from research institutions in the country, blaming the phenomenon on inadequate funding and poor conditions of service in the schools. It warned that

From Onwuka Nzeshe in Abuja

At the end of the meeting said that the National Executive Committee discussed the state of its members in the various research institutes across the country and condemned in very strong terms the per-