

KEROSENE EXPLOSION:

● *A Port Harcourt family was wiped out by fire resulting from a kerosene explosion as the only survivor flown to South Africa for treatment also died*

By Jimitota Onoyume, Port Harcourt

IF the late Mene Kpugi Fade had a premonition of what was to befall his household that Sunday morning he would certainly have restrained himself from going close to the lantern in his one room apartment after a power outage. He never sensed danger. He did not imagine that the action he was to take would cause him, his darling wife and their two children their lives.

According to neighbors in his Local close, Railway quarters, Port Harcourt, they said the late Mene woke up at about 1am last Sunday to see that there was no light. So he immediately went for the lantern, but soon as he struck the matches the lamp went up in flames. The sad development was further

fueled by a small gasoline generator on one end of the room.

Don Ine Junior, a neighbor who was part of the rescue team gave a graphic account of how it went.

"It was slightly above 1am when we started hearing shouts of "fire oh, fire oh". Most of us in the area ran out only to see that it was coming from late Mene's apartment. He was battling

with the burglary proof. He finally opened it and ran out with his son, Hope. While wreathing on the ground they were at the same time screaming that others were inside. But none of us could go near the fire. When it became clear to us that those inside had roasted to death we had to shift attention to how to prevent the fire from spreading.

Mr. Don continued that

they later rushed the father and his son, Hope who sustained about eighty percent burn to the hospital. He regretted that the father who later passed on the next day would have survived if the two hospitals they first ran to had admitted them.

As at press time, the only surviving son, Hope had been flown to South Africa on the bill of the Rivers State government.

○ A similar incident had occurred a week earlier in the state which also claimed the life of a cripple simply described in her neighborhood as Mama Mercy, a kerosene dealer. According to eyewitnesses around her Borokiri area in Port Harcourt Town, they said the victim was pouring kerosene into a customer's gallon when a lamp by her side ignited fire. Effort to save her life failed as she was reportedly burnt to death.

Another kerosene explosion, which happened at Okochiri town in Okrika, caused two sisters, Ine and Darling Siekaya to sustain severe burns.

Sources said the explosion erupted from a lantern by a side of their room. Their

While wreathing on the ground they were at the same time screaming that others were inside, but none of us could go near the fire. When it became clear to us that those inside had roasted to death we had to shift attention to how to prevent the fire from spreading

Continues on Page 14

Kerosine Explosion

Continues from Page 13

mother, Mrs. Gladys Siekaye Nonju said, "all I could hear in the room that night was a loud explosion after she lit the lamp. Darling was able to escape because she was already awake before the explosion. Her elder sister was however not lucky because she was still fast asleep before the incident".

The fire was reportedly extinguished with the effort of youths around.

Revelations from the neighborhood later showed that the killer kerosene came from the Port Harcourt Refinery Depot, Eleme.

Meanwhile, the Department of Petroleum Resources, Port Harcourt zone shortly after these explosions went round some filling stations in the state capital, taking samples of their kerosene. They said they were for laboratory analysis.

Continuing, they urged

the public to endeavor to buy petroleum products from the filling stations. Acting Zonal Operation Controller, Mrs. Oyenbuchi Sibeudu and Mr Tunji Atiba, head, Down Stream who spoke said the samples they took would help determine if adulterated kerosene were also being sold at some of the filling stations.

They also took time to assess the quality of petrol being dispensed at filling stations in the area too. Because in recent time condensate has been selling on the streets of Port Harcourt as petrol. This product said to be highly inflammable in some quarters is believed to be what was sold to some of the victims as kerosene.

As though confirming this speculation when the DPR team later visited the burnt premises of the late Mene Kpugi some of the neighbors who spoke to them said they get their

kerosene from hawkers on the streets since there is scarcity of the product. The DPR team however again stressed on the need for people to buy their products from the filling station.

Mr. Anthony, a kerosene dealer also urged the people to embrace the advice of DPR. For him they should not patronize hawkers. Because after this people finish selling they disappear from that spot. But no filling station or legitimate operator of surface tank will want to joke with a business he started with a capital running into several millions.

When residents of the state were still happy that one of the Fades would survive the kerosene explosion since he had been flown to South Africa for better medicare, surprisingly news filtered into the state last Sunday that Hope Fade had passed on. According to a relative, efforts to save

his life by doctors over there were futile. They reportedly amputated two of his legs before he gave up the ghost.

The lamentation that trailed the death had hardly settled when another kerosene explosion occurred in far away Ogboloma community in Abua/Odua local government area of the state. According to Mr. Ukwoma Inyabua, the sad development claimed the life of school pupil Rebecca Afonya. The ten year old child was reportedly also making attempt to light a lantern when it went up in flames. She reportedly died on her way to the hospital.

According to Ukwoma who described himself as the uncle, the little child could not make it to the hospital because of the long distance from the community to the nearest hospital in the area. This again has re-echoed the need for government at all