

# Metro

**N**O fewer than 20 victims of kerosene explosion were on admission at different hospitals in Rivers State at the time of writing this piece. Some of them that could speak told the story of how they found themselves in the hospital when a team from the Department of Petroleum Resources, Port Harcourt unit visited them. A common trend in their story was that they got the killer kerosene from the road side.

Sergeant Maxwell Samson Udo who lost his wife, three children and a brother-in-law to the killer kerosene penultimate Sunday at his Bernard Carr residence in Port Harcourt said he was within the premises of his house that fateful night when suddenly he heard chilling voices from his apartment, and quickly he rushed to see what was happening. Behold, fire had engulfed the whole apartment. He made frantic effort to rescue his family members. Assisted by neighbours they were rushed to two different hospitals where they were rejected before they were finally admitted at another. He too sustained first degree burns and was admitted at the Police clinic. The news he later heard on his hospital bed was that all members of his family died from the sad development.

Udo who is a police man and attached to the Anti-Kidnap unit of the SIB in the state told the Vanguard Metro that a friend gave him the kerosene as gift. According to him, he visited the friend whose wife sold kerosene at Mbiama bridge. On his way back to Port Harcourt, the friend gave him one of the 20-litre jerry cans of kerosene in the wife's store.

"I did not know this kerosene would wipe out my whole family", he lamented to Vanguard Metro. At press time, Udo was still being treated for post-trauma disorder. The doctor attending to him said since he suffered only first degree burns, his treatment is such that he could be discharged soon but because he was constantly passing out, apparently due to the loss of his children, wife and brother-in-law, the hospital decided to keep him for observation.

At the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital some of the victims of the killer kerosene said they had been there in the last three months. One of them who simply gave his name as Umoru said he struck a match to light his lantern when it suddenly went up in flames. In the process he suffered burns.

Ino who also had a similar experience said she had been in the hospital for about four months. Evelyn who hails from Andoni local government in Rivers State said he was pouring kerosene into a lantern when it exploded, adding that she bought the product at a road side.

A Naval personnel who reportedly suffered close to 100 per cent burns could not utter a word. Efforts to make him even mention his name was fruitless as he was motionless on his bed.

One of the doctors at the hospital who spoke under condition of anonymity said close to 20 persons have died as a result of killer kerosene explosion. According to her, a family of six were all consumed recently in the state. And another



*'Mr Umoru on his hospital bed narrating his ordeal to VM'*

## Killer kerosene: Death toll hits 20 In Rivers

...As DPR urges Nigerians to buy Kerosene from licensed dealers

BY UMUTOTA  
ON **non exploitable**  
Harcourt

lost both parents. In another incident, she said only the mother survived, while the two children and their father died.

Meantime, the Department of Petroleum Resources, DPR has enjoined consumers of kerosene and other petroleum products to always get them from licensed

**On his way back to Port Harcourt, the friend gave him one of the 20-litre jerry cans of kerosene in the wife's store; "I did not know this kerosene would wipe out my whole family"**

petroleum dealers. Zonal Operations Controller, DPR, Port Harcourt, Mrs Oyenbuche Sibedo who spoke to Vanguard Metro said the only way to avoid the problem of kerosene explosion was

for Nigerians to go for their products at filling stations or licensed petroleum dealers.

Mrs Sibedo who spoke after the DPR had gone round to commiserate with victims of killer kerosene said the sad development was worrisome.

"It is a very sad situation; we are not happy with the happenings. It is only safe to buy kerosene from licensed filling stations. They are not hidden, they are all over," she said.

She added that DPR could only guarantee the safety of petroleum product sold by licensed dealers. She further enjoined security operatives to assist in ridding the street of vendors of adulterated petroleum products.

She said during a visit round some victims of the killer kerosene DPR collected samples of kerosene from their homes where the explosion occurred for laboratory test. The result according to her showed that what they had as kerosene was far below specification, while the ones collected from most filling stations in the state capital met

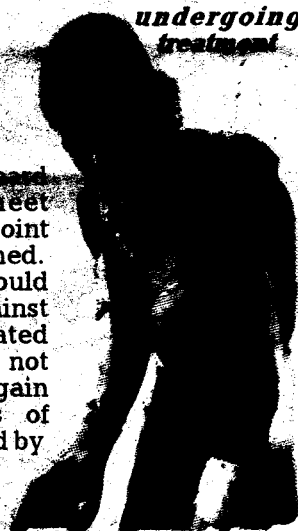
specification.

"We went round, took samples from the victims. And we were able to send them to the laboratory for analysis. We have come up with the result which indicates that the samples from the filling stations are all within specification, same from the depot. The only one from one of

the victims around Bernard Carr did not meet specification, the flash-point was very low," she informed.

Noting that Nigerians could effectively wage war against the sale of adulterated petroleum products by not patronising them, she again condoled with families of those that were consumed by the killer kerosene.

*'Another victim also undergoing treatment'*



## Low sentences worry NDLEA

By ALBERT AKPOR

**T**HE National Drug Law Enforcement Agency NDLEA has expressed worries over the low sentences usually passed on drug convicts by judges, saying the trend was encouraging illicit drug trafficking in the country. Aside that, the anti-drug agency said judges were equally trivializing drug offences by granting an 'option of fine' to suspects, adding that the action was capable of discouraging the fight against trafficking in hard drugs. Chairman of the agency, Mr Ahmadu Giade who made this known while giving a breakdown of his agency's activities in the

year ended 2010 however, assured that his men would not be deterred by the vicious circle of arrest, arraigned, granted bail and back to business by drug traffickers. He announced that in spite of this shortcoming from the judiciary, NDLEA was able to successfully prosecute 1,509 cases against drug suspects. He said: "The prosecution result of 2010 was commendable. Through an established culture of timely investigation, coupled with prompt and diligent prosecution, we were able to win 1,509 cases. However, 793 cases were pending as at December

31, 2010, while 26 were discharged and acquitted. It is worthy of note that an accused named Edgar Abamu Joseph who was arrested at Illushi Town, Edo State with 504 kilograms of cannabis sativa was convicted and sentenced to 32 years imprisonment by the federal court, Benin".

Continuing, the drug czar said: "The agency handled several cases whose appeal went to higher courts. These include the case of one Chukwudi Ugwanyi where the appellant was opposed to the 15 years imprisonment passed on him by the federal high court of Sokoto.