

6 killed, villages razed in A-Ibom

●As youths protest non-payment of compensation by oil firms

BY TONY NYONG

UYO — NO fewer than six persons have been killed, while some villages in Effiat, namely: Inua Abasi, Mbe Ngoro, Ibuot Uton, Utan Brama, and Utan Effiong in Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, were sacked by irate youths.

The youths set homes on fire during a protest over lack of basic amenities and non-payment of compensation by the oil companies operating in the areas.

It was gathered that the crisis started last week but escalated yesterday.

Thousands of the fleeing villagers are currently taking refuge at Ibaka beach with household items rescued from the inferno.

The rampaging youths also accused two prominent sons of the area of depriving them of their entitlements and di-

verting to their private pockets, monies paid by the oil companies for the development of the communities.

Speaking with *Vanguard* on phone, one of the youth leaders of Mbo Youth Forum, who declined to give his name, said that they were disappointed by the greed of their prominent brothers, who have turned round to betray the communities.

He said: "Six people died as a result of this denial and deprivation only last week, and no one knows how many lives would have been lost today (yesterday).

"We had written to the Presidency, the state government, the police and the other security formations of the gross misconduct of those two individuals, but there has been no response.

"We fought with the oil companies and they agreed to be paying compensation, which

they have not been paying to us as host communities, but the two persons involved connived with the companies and collect a monthly compensation of over N32 million, which they continue to share."

The youths alleged that a gubernatorial aspirant, who is running a community surveillance contract with the oil companies and a certain chief in the area, colluded to deprive the communities of their due.

Trouble, it was learnt, started when two surveillance boats belonging to the two prominent sons working for the oil companies were seized by the youths, after efforts to get the two to release the monies as agreed failed.

Mr. Etim Etim Etisong, a victim, who narrated his ordeal to *Vanguard*, said: "I have lost my medicine and provision shop and my 15 rooms bungalow apartment. How and where do I start from?"