

Pupils, maid electrocuted

Helpless. The maid was electrocuted as she removed clothes from the washing line. The two other children died as they tried to rescue their house help.

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KAMPALA. Roselyn Ssimbwa, 12, saw their maid only identified as Rossette in pain shaking and crying as she held onto a cloth on the washing line. In a child's innocence, she rushed to help.

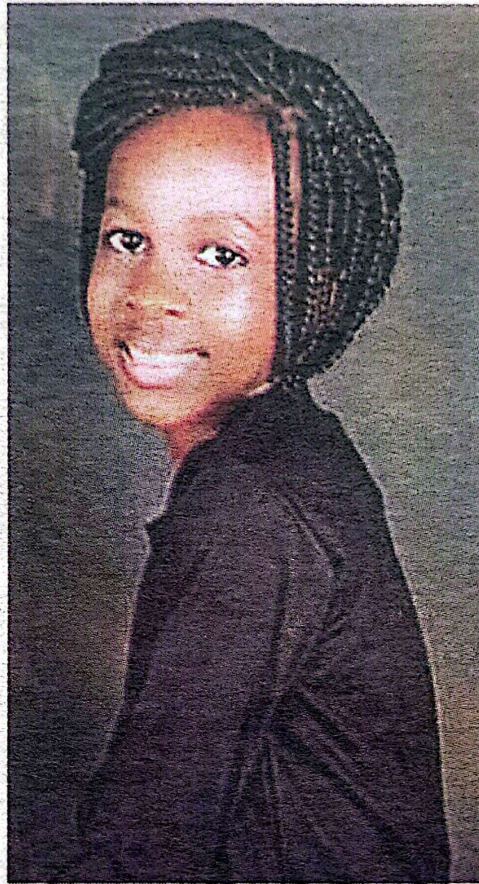
As soon as Ssimbwa touched the maid, she got stuck and began shaking involuntarily.

Ssimbwa's brother, Kevin Kito, 19, dashed to rescue the pair. Kito swiftly picked a wet piece of cloth to hit the wire in an attempt to detach the trapped duo. He got transfixed.

In a minute, the trio was dead. The swiftness of electric shock had snapped up promising lives of two children and their maid, turning the pride of parenting to the pain of grief and a desolate family.

According to Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesman Luke Owoyesigire, the electrocution happened at around 7:30pm on Saturday in Bulwa Zone of Kampala's Rubaga Division.

"We were told that the family has been using the hanging wire for a while without any problem. We can't tell as of now whether



HOW IT HAPPENS

As the electric current passes through one's body, it will meet resistance in the form of flesh (which acts the same way as a resistor in a circuit). Like a resistor though, this also creates heat, which is what causes the sometimes severe burns that one can receive from an electric shock. The precise effects and severity of electric shocks depend on the strength of the current and where it passes through the body.

Source: healthguidance.org

Shock. Roselyn Ssimbwa, 12, is among the children that died trying to rescue the maid. COURTESY PHOTO

the washing line touched an illegal connection or it was a cable buried in the earth that electrocuted them," Mr Owoyesigire said yesterday.

The bodies of the three have been taken to the city mortuary in Mulago, pending autopsy.

Ms Grace Nyangoma, the Old Kampala Division Police Commander, said by the time they reached the scene, it was too dark to establish the cause of the electrocution.

"Since it was at night, the Umeme team suggested that we wait

until the next day (yesterday) to make an assessment. Unfortunately, the rain yesterday interrupted the assessment. We left everything to Umeme team. You should talk to them," Ms Nyangoma said.

Police said they were awaiting a report of Umeme investigations to determine whether to open a criminal case or not.

The Umeme spokesperson, Mr Steven Illungole, said their preliminary investigations indicate an illegal electricity connection that "energised the metallic washing line" likely caused the deaths.

"We express our sincere condolences to the families that lost their loved ones and appeal to the public to support us by reporting incidents of illegal connections and power thefts," Mr Illungole said in a statement in response to our inquiries.

At least 10 people die weekly due to electrocution in Uganda, according to the 2014 Uganda Police Force Crime report.

Most of the cases are in Eastern Uganda and Kampala city especially in the slums where there are high cases of illegal power connection.

In the city slums, residents connect power through buried cables. Some of these cables are exposed to water during the rainy season, causing injuries and in the worst cases deaths.