

CityFile



Sunday Ene(r), his wife and children all lost their lives allegedly after the traditional rite

Pic by Regis Anukwuoji

Family of seven wiped out after partaking in traditional rite

■ Mystery surrounds circumstances of deaths

Regis Anukwuoji

A family of seven was found dead after partaking in a traditional ceremony in Amiri community, Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The seven persons who lost their lives were named as Sunday Ene, male, of about 30 and the only child of his mother from a polygamous family who is the head of the family, his wife and two children. Others include Sunday's mother and his two cousins.

Speaking with newsmen on the shocking death, the half brother to the deceased, Afamuefuna Ene who reportedly came from Enugu that morning following a phone call, said the incident happened at night, claiming he only returned to meet all of them dead.

"The family was alive yesterday and took part in the traditional celebration which involved sacrificing fowls to appease our father's spirit and all that."

He further explained that he did not believe that the cause of their death could be as a result of choke from the generator in the house, as claimed by neighbours.

In an interview with the deceased father-in-law, Samuel Madu, who gave a totally different view, he expressed bitterness on the way he was

treated by the relatives of the deceased whom he accused of not allowing him take his dead daughter and his grand-children for autopsy.

"They blocked the ambulance I hired with a car with the dead body already inside and dragged the dead body down, and deposited it in a very bad mortuary in the area. The worst was that those my little grand children were buried without autopsy under the condition they met their death."

Madu explained further that as he came to the house he saw the whole windows and doors of the building where they slept littered with black substances alleged to be either offensive chemical or charms, saying some of the neighbours who visited the place earlier disclosed they could not breathe and therefore called on the police to kindly investigate the mysterious death.

The father-in-law revealed that Sunday, the only child, was forced to build a house outside his father's compound because of the sour relationship between him and his polygamous brothers, as the house was officially opened on December 10, 2009.

He lamented that he would never forget the incident for the rest of his life, even as he called on Enugu State government and the local government authority to find out why he was stopped from carrying out autopsy before the burial of his daughter and grand-children were hurriedly done.

"These people are not sleeping in one room, the man was in his room, the wife and two children were in another room, the mother and the two other children were in different rooms. And the food they prepared during the ceremony was not taken by them alone, as their neighbours who took the food with them stayed to watch video with them till they went to bed all alive."

Many people from the community who visited the compound at Umuekwu village were dumbfounded and could not explain what exactly had happened, as they continued to lament and freely commented on the black substances around the house, windows and doors.

Also speaking, the chief medical director, Agbani District Hospital, Alphosus Eze, who certified the people dead, stated that they had commenced autopsy to find out what could have led to such "an ugly death of a family of seven in one night."

Reacting to the incident, Enugu police command public relations officer, Ebere Amaraizu, confirmed the death and described it "as very unfortunate", saying the police had commenced investigation to unravel the mystery behind the deaths.

Meanwhile, it was uncontrollable tears from relations and neighbours of the deceased who spoke in hushed tones when Cityfile visited.

Tit bits

40,000 students may miss May/June WAEC in Edo

Unless the authorities of Edo State ministry of education and the association of proprietors of private school owners in the state resolve their differences over 40,000 prospective 2010 West African Examination Council (WAEC) candidates may not be able to enroll for the examinations in the state.

The prospective candidates may also be denied of enrolling for the National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO).

The private school owners in the state had last year dragged the state government to court over what it called unprogressive tax regime which increased their tax by more than 100 percent.

At the continuation of the hearing of the case at the state high court in Benin, the presiding judge Morrison Ighodalo advised the authorities of the state ministry of education to dialogue with the proprietors of the private school owners in order to clear grey areas over qualification for registration of the about 40,000 students for the May/June WAEC. Registration for the examination expires Friday January 15, 2010.

Uneasy calm reigns in Aba North, South LGAs

Uncertainty now stares at the faces of employees of Aba North and South Local Government Councils of Abia State, as the tenure of the local government administration in the state winds down on January 20, 2010, without salaries and allowances been paid.

The workers are worried that the outgoing chairmen may not be able to clear the unpaid bills that are now in arrears of 12 months for Aba North and seven months for Aba South.

Most of them are not also sure of retaining their jobs in the new dispensation as speculations are rife that the outgoing administrations wanted to cut down on the workforce of the councils as a result of what they termed 'over bloated workforce.'

The chairmen at different fora complained that salaries and allowances of their staff took about 90 percent of their total monthly subvention; a situation they argued was a constraint to their developmental programmes.

Consequently, they considered cutting down on their workforce which was rebuffed by the workers' unions of both councils, who embarked on strike to protest the plan.

They also alerted National Union of Local Government Workers (NULGE) Abia State branch, as well as the governor for their assistance.

The governor promised last year he would ensure that the debtor local government chairmen clear the bills before vacating office, noting that they had no reason not to pay staff salaries as they got their subvention from source.

However, as it stands now, the workers' faith are hanging on the balance, because they are not sure of where the money for their salaries will come from and when it would come, having spent the Christmas and New Year celebrations on empty stomach.

Despite the confusion, some employees are still looking into the future with hope. A reliable source at Aba North told Cityfile that happy days were back again at the council with the departure of the outgoing administration.