



Residents bemoan increasing death of pedestrians on service lanes

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MRS. Roselyn Okezie, a mother of three children, parked her car by the side of the expressway at Ilasa, precisely at Madilas Bus-stop. She cautioned her elderly auntie from the village not to allow the kids to come out of the car. She came out of the car, looked toward the direction of vehicular traffic movement at the side she parked and unaware that the service lane is a dual carriageway for vehicles going both ways, and seeing that the only vehicle coming from Oshodi side was not near, she dashed on to the road to quickly cross to the median between the express road and the service lane, a reckless motorist coming on top speed on the opposite direction from Apapa side, ran on her and crushed her to death instantly.

In yet another incidence, it was a gory sight at Five Star Bus Stop on Oshodi-Apapa Expressway, Lagos as the body of an unidentified young man, hit by a car, lay unattended to for several hours on the service lane. It would take only the strong-willed to cast a second glance at the corpse of the man knocked down in the early hours of the day, long before early callers began arriving the spot. The man was said to have successfully crossed the expressway but unknown to him that the service lane was a dual carriageway, he ran onto a fast moving car as he tried to cross.

Such accident is a frequent occurrence along the service lanes on Apapa-Oshodi Expressway. The frequency is so much these days that those living along the highway have called on government to do something to halt the alarming vehicle knock down of ignorant pedestrians.

An elderly resident at Ilasa, Pa Adebisi Jagunmolu, who said he had witnessed uncountable number of pedestrians' untimely deaths on the service lanes since 1975, when the road was

constructed, wondered why the concerned authorities have not done anything to stop the worrisome trend.

"It has always bothered me that in spite of the frequent deaths that occur on this road, government and the media have remained silent on the issue.

"The cause of the accidents is government's failure to mark and provide warning signals on the road to alert innocent pedestrians that the service lanes on both sides of this expressway from Oshodi to Cele Bus stop are two carriageways for traffic traveling on both directions.

He said that the absence of warning signals makes pedestrians, especially new visitors to assume that the service lanes are one-way traffic and therefore always cross without looking at the opposite direction after they have ascertained that no vehicle is coming from the side they erroneously fix their minds on.

Helen Olise, a trader at Aswani Market, said her sister, who came from the village on a visit to Lagos was killed by a motorist at Five star Bus stop when she was crossing the service lane to board a bus, which stopped on the expressway. She said her late sister was unaware that the service lane was a dual carriageway.

"She was at Aswani side and as a new comer to Lagos, she noticed that vehicles coming from Oshodi toward Apapa were on the side she was standing and the ones going to Oshodi from Apapa side were at the other side of the expressway. So, when she wanted to cross the service lane to enter the bus that stopped near the median between the expressway and the service lane, she was unaware that a vehicle was coming on speed from the opposite direction. And as she entered the road to quickly board the waiting bus the motor coming against the traffic crushed her to death," she said.

Mrs. Kadiratu Akinu, a middle aged lady, who went to assist her younger sister to bathe her new baby at the opposite side of the expressway at Ilasa was killed by a motorist driving against

the traffic on the service lane.

Abigail Ozolua, a GCE 'O' level exam candidate, who came from Edo State to retake her examinations in Mushin, Lagos was knocked down and died on the spot at Hassan Bus-stop, Ilasa, while she was crossing the service lane on her way home from the exams in the evening.

A lady was also killed in front of The Guardian some years ago while crossing the service lane to deliver a message to her sister in The Guardian. She had parked her car at the other side of the highway on her way to Apapa. As she attempted to cross the service lane a car coming on top speed against traffic from Apapa towards Oshodi rammed on her and she died on the spot.

The list is of the affected people is endless. Those who survived cannot forget in a hurry the severe pains and psychological trauma they suffered.

A road surveyor, Kola Olabisi, who said that government's failure to provide warning signals and road signs on the affected stretch of road, is barbaric and murderous, blamed urbanization on the sad development.

According to him "the divergent focus of the ineffective national transport policy and road safety framework, as well as the poorly integrated institutional arrangement in road safety apparatus; and the discontinuity trend in road design, maintenance and classification are responsible. "The disintegrated state of traffic system management, especially in the urban centres, as well as the inexistence of road traffic environmental integration combined to complicate the unsafe state of road traffic environment in Nigeria."

He advocated users-friendly road traffic environment that encourages sustainable traffic system management, road traffic design and maintenance, intensification of road traffic safety educational programmes etc, to curb the menace."

Alhaji Isa Ahmed, a resident in Ilasa, who confirmed that he has witnessed so many of such accidents, said it is disheartening that such is still happening now after many lives have been lost on the road.

"In a civilized society traffic safety is achieved by reaching harmony between people, roads and vehicle, which altogether make the road traffic environment. But in Nigeria the road environment is unfriendly and this explains why auto accident is rampant," he said.

A research has confirmed that road environment in Nigeria is dominated by illiterate or inexperienced or drunk or over-confident drivers who are unconcerned about the lives of other road users. Most of the drivers drive vehicles that are poorly maintained and on roads that are poorly designed and ill maintained in an environment where the relevant governmental authorities merely pay lip service to road safety.

A Road Safety Commission official, who spoke on condition of anonymity said the number of deaths that had occurred on the service lanes on the expressway, that is, the percentage of female, male, elderly and child involved would be difficult to ascertain because no official record is kept on the trend.

When contacted, officers at the police stations at Ilasa and Iyana Isolo said that though they were aware of vehicles knocking down pedestrians in the area, they were not in a position give the number of victims and the dates of the accidents.

One of the police officers narrated an incidence he witnessed a year ago at opposite Afprint Plc, where a pregnant young lady, who wanted to cross the service lane to board a motorbike, was knocked down by a vehicle that was traveling against the traffic. He said the lady died on the spot and the motorist who was on phone when the accident occurred, on seeing what had happened, zoomed off to avoid being arrested or lynched.

He enjoined the authorities to provide road signs, marking, paintings, lanes partitioning and installation of speed reduction devices to prevent or reduce the carnage.