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## Man who lost wife, two children to fire, seeks assistance

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**By Celestine Amoke / Chief Copy**

*Editor*

**Mr.** Anthony Ogbonna left home for work early morning of January 28 full of optimism to find the day's bread for the family, oblivious of what was in stock for him. Three of his children had asked daddy to buy something for them when returning from work. After the day's job, he went to the nearby market to buy some goodies for the children.



- Late Ugochukwu, Chidozie and their mother with Soromtochukwu (right), the only surviving child.

However, on reaching home, what confronted him was not what he bargained for. Tragedy had struck at his residence at Ameke Ngwo, near 9th Mile, Enugu. State.

Ogbonna could hardly recognise his residence as the building had been gutted by fire. He dashed to his apartment only to meet the charred bodies of two of his three sons, Ugochukwu, 12, and Chidozie, 8, who had been consumed by the fire.

Their mother too had been seriously burned. She had rushed into the house to rescue the boys who were sleeping at the time of the incident. Unfortunately, she was trapped in the building and the thick smoke emanating from the building made rescue efforts by volunteers fruitless. She was seriously burned in the process. The two children were burned beyond recognition while their mother was rushed to Annunciation Hospital, Emene, Enugu, where she died after three weeks in the intensive care unit.

The only child remaining for Ogbonna is Soromtochukwu, who had not returned from church at the time of the incident.

Apart from losing his two children and wife to the inferno, Ogbonna also lost all his household property. The only thing he had were the clothes he was wearing on the fateful day.

*Daily Independent* gathered that the fire started from a lantern suspected to contain adulterated kerosene. The lantern was said to have exploded, setting fire to the building. All rescue efforts proved abortive as the fire spread very fast.

Mr. Ogbonna told *Daily Independent* that the bill for the three weeks the wife spent in the hospital before her demise was N450, 000 apart from some medications he had to buy outside the hospital. The burial of the deceased also consumed a lot of money.

Since then, Mr. Ogbonna has been devastated. It had not been easy for him to start life afresh with his only surviving son. Although help had been trickling in for him from public-spirited individuals, more is still needed in terms of cash and materials to rehabilitate

him.

For inability to rent a house and procure some property, Mr. Ogbonna has since relocated to his village.

In an encounter with *Daily Independent*, recently, Ogbonna said: “I am finished, my wife, my two children, everything we have, went up in flames. All my hope is gone. Where do I start?

“My only son now, Soromtochukwu, is out of school because there is no money to pay his school fees,” he stated.

Before the incident, Ogbonna, who was an artisan at Nigerian Breweries, 9th Mile, Enugu, had stopped work. He had not been able to start anything since then because there is virtually no money to start anything. He had been living on charity from people in the neighbourhood.

“Many people had been encouraging me to brace up with the realities and pick up myself and start life again. But how do I start? I need your help,” he stated.

“I am a motor electrician. I need to set a workshop and buy some tools and equipment. I am really confused,” he further stated.

If you are touched by his plight and you want to help in the rehabilitation of Mr. Ogbonna, his particulars are as follows: Account name: Anthony Ogbonna; Bank: First Bank; Account No: 3022203659; telephone number: 08081368689.

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