

Furore over death of two-year-old baby who fell from school's three-storey building



Sunny Nwankwo October 28, 2023



Like many other poor Nigerian families, the parents of Mr. Jacob Etim, an indigene of [Akwa Ibom State](#), could not muster the funds to train him in school. Born into a large family, Etim hadn't the luxury of joining other children of his age to play or while away time in the village as he was always busy helping his parents with farm work to ensure that there was food on the family's table.

Having waited and got tired of watching his parents suffer, Etim decided to leave his family house in Akwa Ibom for

Mr. Jacob Etim, an indigene of Akwa Ibom State and commercial motorcyclist was determined to ensure that his children obtain quality education because he himself did not have the opportunity for same because of the circumstances of his birth and his environment. Unfortunately, he lost his only son in very bizarre circumstances, reports SUNNY NWANKWO.

the commercial city of Aba in neighbouring Abia State to face whatever challenge life would throw at him.

His mission in Aba was to come see how God could help him fend for himself and also ensure that his parents in the village got some stipends every month from his little savings.

Shortly after arriving Aba in 2008, Etim decided to learn furniture making; a skill that he anticipated would help him to grow his business to compete favourably with other brands in the market, using his little savings as a start-off.

In 2016, as part of his desire to have a helpmate and begin raising his own children, Etim used part of the little money that he was able to save from his furniture business to marry his beautiful wife, Onyekachi, in 2016. Mercifully, the marriage produced two beautiful children, a girl and a boy.

In 2018, the furniture workshop closed down despite his efforts to rejuvenate his business. Rather than stay idle, Etim was able to raise some money to buy a motorcycle which he used for commercial transportation to ensure that he not only put food on the family's table but also meet the children's academic needs and upkeep.

Penultimate Tuesday, Etim, like every other member of the household at their No. 2 Ugwumba Street residence in Aba South Local Government Area, woke up hoping that the day would bring good fortunes only for cruel fate to greet him with the sad news of the death of David, his only son.

If the death of David was shocking, the circumstances made it even more so, as he was said to have fallen to death from a three-storey building that housed his classroom. Not surprisingly, David's has thrown up several questions that would take prudent investigation by the Abia State Police Command to unravel; the most pungent being why a teacher or class assistant would leave their toddler pupils in a three storey building without thinking of possible consequences.

Since the news of the death of the two-and-a-half-year-old baby broke, Abians and indeed Nigerians have been asking whether the teacher actually left him and other children to buy snacks and why the management of the school would keep pupils of that age in a three-storey building without thinking of possible dangers or threats to their lives.

Father's account

"On Tuesday, October 17, I drove my two children to their school, Emerald International Academy, at N0. 20 Crystal Park, off Port Harcourt Road, Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.

"On getting to the school, I made attempt to take the children inside but one of their teachers called me back to ask if I had paid their school fees. They said that they were on school fees drive and had been instructed not to allow any child entry into the school or their classrooms if they had not paid their school and other necessary fees.

"I didn't have such money because I didn't make any budget for such expenses. But because I didn't want my children to be at home when other children were in school, I rallied round to ensure that I got money to pay their fees before they allowed them to go to their classes.

“Their school dismisses at 3 O’clock, and by 3:20 pm, I was in the school to pick my children. On getting to the school, I saw my daughter but didn’t see the brother, David. The sister told me that her brother fell from the building, but I didn’t understand what she was saying until a much older student that should be about 11-12 years came to explain to me.

“According to the boy, they were the people that first got to the scene to pick my child up from the floor and raised the alarm before some of the teachers came to collect him from them and rushed him to the hospital. From their account, blood was gushing out of my son’s nose and mouth when the teachers rushed to the hospital.

“I rushed to John Okorie Memorial Hospital, behind the Emerald School, where they said that my son was taken to. When I got to the hospital, I saw some nurses and the teacher who looks after them until parents came to collect their children.

“I saw my child lying on the floor and surrounded by the nurses as well as the teacher and some others who were crying.

“I asked what was happening, and the teacher told me that after the school dismissed, she went to buy snacks and returned to witness what had happened. The question is why would the teacher leave the children in such a high rise building to go and buy snacks as she wants us to believe, and leave the children in the hands of no adult?

“Usually, what happens is that when the school dismisses, the children are kept at the school’s security post where the security man looks after them until their parents come to pick them up. But what happened that day is what I don’t know.

“How can a teacher leave the children to go and buy snacks? Can’t she take the children to the security post before going to buy the snacks that she claimed she went to buy?

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“At that point, when it was obvious that my son was dead, I didn’t know what else to do than to go to Ndiegoro Police Division (Cameron Barracks) to make an entry. It was after the entry that I went with the Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) 3 to deposit the body of my boy at the mortuary.

“As we speak, the boy comes to me in dreams every day to ask that I should come and take him away from the mortuary. The sad thing is that until this time that we are talking, the management of the school is yet to reach out to us; not even to send a condolence message.

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“That is heartless and insensitive of a school as big as Emerald International School.

“The next day, I was told that we were going to the State CID. When we got there, they said that the paper was not properly documented; that we should go back and properly document the papers. That is where we are.

“I want the government to come to my aid. A child is not owned by one person. My son who has a bright future just died because of the negligence of the teacher. I simply want justice for my son, David.

Mother’s account

“I am Mrs. Onyekachi Jacob, the mother of David Jacob.

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“On Tuesday, October 17, I dressed my children up for school only for my husband to tell me that they (Emerald International School) said that our children would not be allowed into their classes unless we paid their school fees for the term.



“We did as we were told. We rallied round to pay their school fees the same day before they allowed them entry into their classes.

“While I was in my shop, something pushed me to start going to their school. What I had in mind was to bring them back from school. But to my greatest shock, what I met there has until date kept me traumatised.

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“How do I explain to people that my son, David Chikamso Jacob, who went to school with his sister, Blessing, is dead?

“When I got to their school, it was Blessing that told me that her brother, David, fell from the last floor and crash landed. When I came into the school compound, even the gate man did not tell me what had happened. It was my daughter that held me by the hand and led me to the spot where her brother’s blood stained the floor.

“While I was still trying to know if what the elder sister said was true or not, another pupil in the school came and directed me to the hospital where my son was taken to. I went to the hospital to meet the corpse of my son who left home hale and hearty.

“At the hospital, no one was able to tell me how my only son died. I have been left shattered since the incident. I am pained and traumatised that a child I carried for nine months, a child that will always read my mind and knows how to act to lift my heart when I am not happy.

“He may be two-years-six months old, but he acts beyond children of his age. Why would the carelessness of a teacher end the journey of a bright son like Chikamso as I fondly called him?

“It has been my husband and I that have been running around since this incident. The teachers and school management have kept quiet. The school is on and no one cares. They have been acting as if nothing happened. Maybe they are doing all these because we don’t have the money to fight for justice.

“There was no adequate protection for the safety of the children in the school. The said teacher was careless and that was what resulted in the death of my son.

“My son is my blood and I will not just want this to go without my son getting justice.

“My son died not just a premature but a painful death, and the school is not perturbed. There is no atom of remorse from the school. No phone call from the school or the teacher. Nobody among them has cared to visit the family over the incident.

“Sometimes, if I went to the school and they have not dismissed, I do go to their class to pick them. If they had dismissed, they normally leave them with the gate man who I pick them from at the school gate. Why did their classroom teacher leave the children at the upstairs instead of keeping them with the school’s gateman as she used to do?

“From indications, Chikamso hit his head on the floor which caused his death. He has internal bleeding. I was told that, they tried placing him on oxygen, but instead of the air passing through, it was causing him internal bleeding.

“I am begging government for assistance. They should help us get justice for our son.”

School’s position

When contacted on the phone, one Peter Nwoke, who claimed to be one of the owners of the school, told our correspondent that the accounts of the parents to the late David were false and do not represent the true account of the death of their child.

This is even as Nwoke, who disclosed that he was at the State CID office in Umahia at the time of filing this report, affirmed that David was a pupil in their school.

The Commissioner of Education in the state, Prof. Uche Eme, told our correspondent that at the time of inquiry on the incident from her office, she was in a meeting.

The Education Commissioner said on the phone: “I have seen your text. In a case like this, there will be investigation.”

Contacted by our correspondent, the Public Relations Officer of the Abia State Police Command, Maureen Chinaka, said: “On the evening of October 17, 2023, at approximately 2000hrs, Mr. Jacob Etim Udo, residing at Ugwumba Street, Aba, accompanied by two individuals, arrived at the Ndiegoro Divisional Headquarters with the heartbreaking news of his son David’s tragic accident.

“David, a pupil of Emerald International School located by Crystal Park Road, Aba, was reported to have fallen from a school building, leading to his untimely demise.

“David was swiftly rushed to the hospital, but despite the best efforts of medical personnel, he tragically succumbed to his injuries.

“The child’s body has been recovered and placed for autopsy as part of our ongoing investigation.

“The case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for a comprehensive and discreet inquiry to unravel the circumstances surrounding this unfortunate incident.

“We understand the concerns and emotions that this incident has stirred within the community. We want to assure the public that a meticulous investigation is underway to uncover the truth.

“We urge everyone to remain calm and patient as we conduct this inquiry.

“The authorities are committed to a transparent and thorough examination of the facts, and we will keep the public informed of significant developments.

“Our heartfelt condolences go out to Mr. Jacob Etim Udo and his family during this profoundly difficult time.

“We request the public’s cooperation and understanding while the investigation progresses.

“Rest assured we are dedicated to ensuring justice and will leave no stone unturned in our pursuit of the truth.”