

I never knew my brother could die this way – Sister

48-year-old father of three, Adegboyega Adebayo, dies while trying to refuel his running generator, leaving his family in agony, **KUNLE FALAYI** reports

For the family of Adegboyega Adebayo, January 26, 2013 ended like any other day. It was time to retire to bed and they needed to keep the generator running, to enjoy their sleep.

As usual, there was no power supply at their apartment at No. 3, Abeokuta Street, Iju Ishaga, Lagos. They had to rely on their generator to power their appliances as the night wore on.

But little did they know that it was going to be one long night to remember.

It was a little after midnight when 48-year-old Adegboyega sauntered to the enclosure where the generator was running, in order to refuel it.

The enclosure was just behind a metal door leading from the living room to the staircase out of one their two upper floor apartments.

A source said the generator was running at the time and he felt it was not necessary to put it off and allow it to cool for a while before adding fuel and restarting it.

Perhaps, he had always refuelled it that way, nobody can tell. But as he tried to do so, something went wrong.

Some fuel appears to have touched an inflammable part in the generator, leading to a loud bang.

As Adegboyega yelled in pain, a fire broke out in the house.

Not knowing what to do for her husband, Adegboyega's wife grabbed their three children and fled the apartment.

She went banging on the doors of some neighbours, pleading for help for her husband, who was still trapped in the fire.

"Help, help, fire, fire, fire, my husband, my husband, our property, ah, ah, ah, help me, help me," one of the neighbours recalled the panic-stricken woman as saying as she banged on doors.

Residents of Abeokuta Street said the entire neighbourhood was jolted awake by the persistent banging on doors that morning.

"We thought it was armed robbers. Given the way the doors were being hit, we thought it was an

invasion by robbers. Nobody could have expected us to step out at that time of the night, with such a noise. It could have been suicidal," a neighbour who did not want to be named said.

But the banging was followed by plaintive cries of 'Fire! Fire!'

It was then some courageous residents ventured out of their homes.

They also alerted the Lagos State Fire Service, whose personnel did not appear on the scene until an hour later.

By the time the firemen got to the house, it was too late to badly rescue Adegboyega. He was by then burnt and the two units of two-bedroom flats they occupied were in a mess, as the fire had destroyed all their property.

Charles Onu, whose house shares a fence with the Adebayos, said he did not imagine that such a tragedy could befall one of his neighbours.

"When we first heard the banging next door, we all were afraid because we thought armed robbers were in our area. We had no idea it was a fire outbreak.

"But someone came to my door and called for help, saying there was a fire. I jumped out of bed thinking it was my own house that was on fire. I went outside and saw the wife and three children of the victim outside wailing.

"When I asked the woman what was amiss, she said her husband (Adegboyega) was trapped inside the house. The children too were wailing, pointing to the house and calling for their dad," Onu said.

Saturday People learnt that before the incident, the Adebayos occupied the two flats in the upper floor of the house.

"When I asked the wife what happened, she said her husband went to do something in the place where the generator was kept. She did not explain what he went to do," Onu said.

It was learnt that Adegboyega's wife and children escaped the fire unhurt because they ran out of the building through a back door.

Mr. Arobabaaso Fabiyi, a pastor, whose church the

deceased attended before his death, lives three houses away from the Adebayos.

He said he heard nothing when the fire started.

"I did not hear any shout for help. But sometime around 12.30am, my wife woke me up and said a house was on fire on the street.

"I immediately went there and realised it was where the Adebayos lived. I was shocked. I was told he was trapped inside," the distraught pastor said.

Fabiyi lamented that the fire service did not respond to distress calls swiftly, which made it impossible to save either Adegboyega or any of the family's property.

"The fire service battled the fire for about 10 minutes and they ran out of water. They had to call for another truck, which did not arrive until 45 minutes later," Fabiyi said.

Some residents of Abeokuta Street said after firemen were able to put out the fire and gain access to the apartment, it was noticed that the steel door Adebayo could have escaped through had jammed.

The entire compound was deserted when our correspondent visited on Thursday. Debris of charred asbestos littered the premises.

Our correspondent was told the family could not salvage anything from the apartment.

Adegboyega was the Executive Secretary of the Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria.

Many people in the area described him as a man who was very concerned about safety.

But the Managing Director of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, Dr. Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, had a different opinion.

He said it appeared that the deceased was pouring petrol into the generator while it was on.

"The incident is very unfortunate. Considering all the safety awareness we have done in this state, I don't think this incident should have happened. No one is expected to pour fuel inside a generator while it is on," he said.

He said the body of the deceased was deposited at De Mill Hospital morgue in Iju-Ishaga.

Adegboyega's sister, Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ogunbayo, told our correspondent on the telephone that the deceased's wife could not be reached for now because she was too distraught to comment.

"I never knew that my elder brother could die in this tragic way. This family has lost a very dear soul. I really cannot describe what we are going through right now," she said.

Chairman of Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government, Oloruntoba Oke, visited the razed house as Adebayo's remains were being moved to the mortuary.



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