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Father tackles transport firm over daughter's death

JANUARY 23, 2014 BY COMFORT OSEGHAE

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The Mbegbus

| credits: *Comfort Oseghale*

A communications contractor, Kennedy Mbegbu, has accused the Young Shall Grow Motors of negligence in the death of his eight-month-old daughter, Olivia.

Olivia, the second of two children, was said to have been involved in an accident along the Akure-Ife road on December 22, 2013, while aboard a Young Shall Grow Motors' vehicle. Uzoamaka had boarded the vehicle along with Olivia and her two-year-old brother, Shawn, in Abuja where her family lives.

Mbegbu said, "I live with my family in Abuja. On that day, I took them to the park and waited till the bus took off at 6am. Before the bus left, I got acquainted with another male passenger on the bus (Odigie) and took his number. They were travelling to Lagos State to meet with my extended family for the Christmas holidays. Every 30 minutes, I called my wife to know how the journey was going."

About 4pm, Mbegbu got a call from his wife; she wanted him to send airtime to her phone. Not quite 40 minutes later, Mbegbu got another phone call; this time from Odigie. There had been an accident and Olivia was dead. Uzoamaka was said to be badly injured, only Shawn had escaped with a minor injury.

PUNCH Metro gathered that officials of the Federal Road Safety Corps, who arrived at the scene, rushed the victims to the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital at Ile Ife, Osun State.

Mbegbu said, "My elder brother and sister were already at the hospital when I got there the following day. I met the driver of the vehicle who was also in the same hospital. He told me that the front tyre on his side of the vehicle had burst due to overload. Three persons died in the accident, but the driver also escaped with minor injuries because he was discharged the following day."

PUNCH Metro gathered that Olivia lost one of her arms in the accident and that her head was shattered. She was also said to have sustained a deep cut on her back. Her remains were said to have been taken to the Obafemi Awolowo Teaching Hospital Mortuary. She was later buried at Ile Ife. Meanwhile, Uzoamaka was in a coma.

Mbegbu said his younger sister, Seyi, went to the Jibowu office of the YSGM on December 23, 2013, to lodge a complaint. She was accompanied by her elder brother, Donald, and another sister, Maria. The trio were said to have been directed to the Maza Maza office of the company.

Seyi said, "The security men at the YSGM Maza Maza office, admitted that they had heard of the accident, but another official of the company, who claimed to be in the administrative department, feigned ignorance. He identified himself as Ike, although I am not sure it is his real name. He took my number, but he never called back.

"He claimed there was nothing they could do. The company had an insurance policy of N50,000 for any death resulting from an accident involving the firm's vehicles. He added that Uzoamaka could only get N5,000 for her treatment. He said Olivia did not qualify for the policy because she did not buy a ticket."

Uzoamaka, who is currently at the Igbogbi Orthopaedic Hospital, was said to have undergone a surgery to save her left hand. Two more surgeries, including a skin graft, is expected to put her on the road to recovery.

When **PUNCH Metro** visited YSGM office at Maza Maza, our correspondent was directed to its headquarters at Alakija area of Lagos. An official, who did not identify himself, said, "I am just hearing about that accident for the first time. Even if the family came here, there is nothing we can do for them. It is our office at Alakija that is in a position to do anything."

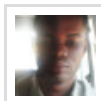
At the YSGM Alakija office, the personal assistant to the Managing Director, who was expected to give a response, was said to be busy with other matters. Despite leaving a note and a contact number, there was no response from the firm as of the time of filing this report.

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