

How truck killed mum on immunisation duty – Edo nurse's son

Oshiotse Egwenomeh, the son of a nurse and chairperson of the Forum of Local Government Nurses and Midwives in the Ovia South-West Local Government Area of Edo State, Tina Egwenomeh, who was crushed to death by a truck on the road to Igobazua on November 13, 2023, while on immunisation duty, talks to ADEYINKA ADEDIPE about the incident

HOW would you describe your late mum? I don't know how much I can tell you right now. She was a cheerful giver, very caring, loving, and nice. She is someone who touched people's lives in different ways and you didn't need to tell her your problems before she put herself forward to render assistance. There is no word I can use to describe her, but I guess she was the best mother I could have had.

Can you recall some of the experiences you had with her while growing up?

While growing up, she was the one who mainly took care of the house because my dad was always on the move due to his job. So, my mother was the one who was always with us though my father always made sure we were okay. Even before she died, she secured the small jobs I did and even gave me money when I didn't have any. She took care of the family and never waited for my dad before doing so. One more thing I remember her for is that my siblings and I were never admitted to the hospital. She took care of our medical needs and ensured we stayed healthy.

How did the news of her death get to you and your family members?

I was home on that day when the doctor in charge of Ovia South-West called and asked me to meet him at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital. I didn't think anything was wrong even when I got to the hospital. But before then, I got a call from one of my sisters who lives abroad. She said her friend told her that our mother was involved in an accident. I told her that I had been trying to reach her (our mother) through her phone but I was not getting through. She then instructed me that I should let her know what was happening if I got any information. By

then, the doctor had called me to meet him at the UBTH and I just thought that she sent him to me as she had done in the past. My cousin, who lives with us, said he saw people looking at my mum's picture on their phone and crying on Ring Road in the Oredo Local Government Area. He said it looked like my mother was gone. So, I went to see her body.

What was your initial reaction when you saw her corpse?

It was a big shock. I couldn't even see her face because the vehicle crushed her head. We left home together that fateful day, so I could easily recognise her with the clothing she had on.

Did anyone tell you how the incident occurred?

I can't say because I am hearing different versions of the occurrence and I don't know which one to believe so I am still expecting officials of the council to come and explain to us how the accident happened.

What were you told?

The first set of people I saw at the scene of the accident said that a truck that was laden with logs of wood had a brake failure. My mother was said to have told the driver in the vehicle (an ambulance) she was in that the truck coming in the opposite direction had a problem. I don't know if the driver ran out and left the four occupants in the vehicle, one of whom was my mother. The other person in front (her colleague) was able to escape along with the two at the back, but my mum was not lucky. While trying to escape, they said she fell and was crushed. Her colleague, who also visited the house, had a swollen leg and said she could not recollect how the accident happened.



Where do you live and where did the accident occur?

We live in Isior, close to the S&T Barracks, and I heard they (my mum and others) were moving from Igobazua to Siloko to supervise a job. It was on the Igobazua Road that the accident occurred. It has been very difficult for the family. My two elder sisters are not in the country. I am the last child and my cousin also lives with us. My dad is doing okay but I know that he is grieving inside.

What will she be remembered for?

I will imbibe her good nature. The number of people coming to the house even when her remains have not been interred shows that she was a good person. Over 500 people must have visited the house as of Thursday night and more will still come, while others also came from outside Edo State to see the family. My last moment with her was waiting for her to get a bus that morning before leaving too. I was going to New Benin and she was going to Textile Mill Road. I got on a bus before her and I waved her goodbye as I boarded the bus. I didn't know that was the last time I would see her.

How supportive have the Ovia South-West Local Government and the Forum of Local Government Nurses and Midwives, which she belonged to, been to the family since the incident occurred?

Everyone has been in shock and we have not started plans for her burial yet. They have told us to let them know the burial arrangements so that they can know how they will support us. But they have been coming around to pay condolence visits and calling on the phone too.

The state government commiserated with your family on Wednesday. Has it contacted the family and offered any support?

Apart from that message, we have not heard anything from them in terms of supporting us. The Commissioner for Health, Dr Samuel Alli, was here and spoke to my dad. I think they should provide better vehicles and experienced drivers to convey officials to their places of official assignments to avoid this kind of tragedy.

How have you been helping the family to cope with the loss?

Everyone has been saying that I am the man of the house, but I am also deeply affected by this and I try to do the little I can. However, we have family members from my father and mother's sides paying us daily visits, while an aunt, who came from Auchi, is currently staying with us.

When is the family proposing the burial?

There are no arrangements for that now. I know my father and mother's families will have to meet before a burial plan is announced.

The eyewitnesses, in their accounts of the incident, could not agree on whether or not the driver was in the car when the accident occurred. But I believe that the driver could have diverted the car into the bush and saved the people in his vehicle. Those trucks don't move fast, so there was ample time for the driver to get out of the way. An experienced driver should know what to do at times like that. The driver needs to come and do some explanation because I don't understand all they are saying.

Did you have any worries about your mother's safety that fateful day?

I didn't have any. As I told you, we left home at the same time that morning. She insisted that my cousin and I wait for her so that we could leave the house together. At the bus stop, we waited for over 20 minutes before we boarded a bus. If I knew this would happen, she wouldn't have left the house. I would also have stayed with her at home. It was the immunisation she was going to supervise (that made her go out) and I was also doing the same job for the Oredo Local Government Council as a supervisor.