

Life & Living

Brutalised woman's baby

BY CHIOMA IGBOKWE AND
CHIZOBA IKENWA

“Take me to my son, I want to see him”, Chika Elekawachi pleaded with family members who were still lost in thought on how to break the news of the death of her baby. Chika is the eight-month pregnant woman who was allegedly brutalized by three policemen attached to the Satellite Police Division in Lagos on Sunday, July 19, 2015.

The cops allegedly stripped the woman naked after accusing her of resisting arrest. She was allegedly assaulted before she was dragged to the police station. Her family members later rushed her to Safe Hands Hospital, old Ojo road, Amuwo, Lagos, after she allegedly passed out at the police station.

Her family members got the shock of their lives when the doctor on duty said in the presence of policemen that Chika was hale and hearty. Unfortunately, she started bleeding at about 11pm on Monday when she was rushed into the theatre for surgery. Although the baby boy was delivered on Tuesday alive, and rushed to Outreach Hospital in Festac town, Lagos, which had a functional incubator, the baby died less than 48 hours after.

Her family members have cried out over what they described as an attempt by the police to sweep the matter under the carpet. This is even as the Lagos police command had ordered the immediate arrest and detention of the suspects soon after the authorities learnt that the baby had died.

Chika's version

Chika told *Saturday Sun* reporters on her hospital bed before the surgery that about 8pm on Sunday, she left two of her kids at home and was heading to a shop at Agboju, in Oriade Local Council Development Area (LCDA) to buy some foodstuffs for the house.

“I suddenly noticed a bus coming behind me. The bus obstructed me and one of the occupants came out, pointed a gun at me and shouted that I should park. He threatened to shoot if I didn't park.

“When I discovered that they were policemen, I tried to explain to them that I wanted to park my car so that I could enter the shop. The incident happened at Pako bus stop along Ojo road where there were so many tankers and lorries parked indiscriminately.

“I begged the one that was wearing a black T-shirt to allow me to go, as I was pregnant. Then, he called me a prostitute. I was angry and reminded him that I am a married woman with two kids. I warned him not to call me a prostitute again. But the policeman dragged me down from the car, even as passers-by and my friend were begging him to let me go.

“While I was screaming for help, saying, ‘I am not a thief,’ they tore my trousers. I was not putting on any underwear, so they stripped me naked. They were dragging me, saying I must enter their vehicle, but I refused. They dragged me on the road, but I insisted that I would go with them in my car. In the process, my legs and my stomach were bruised,” she said.

She said she was eventually bundled into the police vehicle and taken to the station, even in her virtually naked state.

“On getting to the police station, I pleaded with them to allow me get a cloth from the shop. I was begging them so that I could meet any woman nearby to give me a wrapper because I was naked. People around were

■ Family demands trial of 3 cops who beat 8-month pregnant housewife into coma



Chika

asking me what happened, and I replied that the policemen did that to me, even though I'm not a thief. Because, with the way I was treated, one could mistake me for a thief. I had to bite one of the policemen on the back.

“I then entered one provision store near the station where I met a woman who gave me this gown. My phone was in my vehicle and I told the police officers that they should allow me call my people to inform them that I was at the station, but they refused. They said I must be put in the cell. I was run-

ning around, trying to get a phone, but no one would give me their phone because they thought I was a mad woman. They were just looking at me. I then saw a young girl, and I spoke to her in Igbo, telling her I was not a thief. She was the one that gave me her phone and I called my sister, because her number was the one I could easily recall. I told her what was happening, so she came with her husband that night and met me at the police station. They were asking me what happened, but her husband said we had

to find those who assaulted me. So, we went into the police station and met the Divisional Crime Officer (DCO). He told us to explain what happened, but as I was talking, I felt dizzy and passed out,” she said.

Police insisted she was pretending-Witness

The victim's sister, Favour Ifebuzor, explained that she rushed down to the police station as soon as she got the distress call from her sister.

“When my husband and I arrived at the scene, I saw my younger sister sitting on a pavement, looking weak. So, we took her into the station to find out what happened. My sister told me that she was feeling weak and dizzy, but the policemen rudely told her to stand up and explain what happened. As she tried to explain, the man at the counter was saying, ‘Why don't you have respect for an officer in uniform? Why did you slap a policeman?’ My sister said it was when the policeman forcefully held her cloth and dragged her that she did that, because it's lawful for one to defend oneself from danger. So, as they were forcefully quizzing her, I told the policeman that she was weak and could slump.

“My sister was also whispering to me that she was feeling weak. So, she fell on the ground. And she was crying, saying ‘O my baby, my baby.’ Then she started foaming in the mouth. The policemen there were saying, ‘she is pretending. Let her stay there, she is not serious.’ They were just watching including the DCO. My husband was saying ‘You people have killed someone's wife and mother. Take her. She is your responsibility. My husband was dragging me so that we could go, but I told him to have patience. said; let me get some water, because my sister was dying. I went to one shop and bought a sachet of water, came back and started pouring it on my sister's head and body, but she was not responding. Instead, her tongue was coming out, foaming.

“I was so scared because her stomach protruded and her body was getting cold. I had to beg one man to help me look for a vehicle. When he got the vehicle, I told the policemen to help me put her in the vehicle, but they were just looking at me. I was confused. The driver of the vehicle and the man that went to get him were the ones that helped me put her in the car. The biscuits I bought for my children and my phone, I didn't even know where I kept them. It was when they put her in the vehicle that I remembered that my phone was on the counter at the station and I went to the counter and picked my phone.

“I then told the policemen that I was taking her to the hospital, and that if anything happened to her, I would hold them responsible. The vehicle had already left. They took her to Safe Hands Hospital, and my husband and I walked to the hospital. When we got there, the doctor told us she was going into labour, and that we needed to move her to the General Hospital. I was confused. I called my sister who also came with her husband. But we heard the policeman who had come there telling the doctor that she was okay. The policeman told the doctor

dies in incubator



Chika's torn dress



Baby inside incubator while alive

'She's okay now. You will write everything that she is okay, and that nobody beat her.' So, the doctor certified her okay, and that she was not in labour again, that he had put everything in order. But this morning, she went into labour again," Favour told our reporters.

Doctor's goof

At the hospital, the doctor on duty, Okoawo Innocent, who spoke on behalf of the management, admitted that Chika was rushed into the hospital half conscious. He said all necessary tests were carried out, noting that the results showed that the baby was intact. He, however, said that the victim would be kept under observation.

Saturday Sun gathered that Safe Hands hospital was one of the best in the area but in an attempt to please the policemen who were battling to prove that Chika was actually pretending to be in labour, they corroborated their claim.

The doctor on duty despite the bruises and the fact that Chika was brought into the hospital unconscious, said that she was perfectly okay. He even suggested that Chika should be released to her family to go home.

Battle to save Chika and baby's life

But the doctor's assertion was proved wrong, as Chika soon after started bleeding. As a result, the doctor on duty became confused and requested that another scan be conducted. He was shocked to discover that the placenta had been detached from the

baby and Chika was bleeding heavily inside. To save her life and that of the baby, she was wheeled into the theatre where the baby was forced out of her.

The Satellite police station DPO was alerted that the story had changed. It dawned on him and some senior officers that Chika's story could be true as the officers involved in the assault had sworn that they did not raise a finger against her. The officers involved who were seen going about their normal duty were immediately arrested and detained.

Realising that it was not business as usual, policemen were mobilized to ensure that the ever busy Badagry expressway was cleared to ensure free access to Outreach medical hospital where the premature baby could be put in an incubator. The little one who was already weak as a result of the delay died less than 48 hours after.

Chika's relative told *Saturday Sun* that at about 4am on Thursday, Chika called insisting that they should go and check her baby. "I told her that it was too early but she kept insisting that I must move over to the hospital that something is wrong. It was then that my phone rang again and it was the doctor. She told me that the baby had just passed on. It is rather unfortunate," she said.

On getting to the hospital, senior officers, including the Satellite DPO, were seen leaving after sighting the dead baby and consoling the family. He was said to have been supportive and promised that the suspects would be prosecuted accordingly. He was said to have pleaded with the family members that the police would pay the bill incurred by the

family.

On the cause of death, Dr Efunbu Dosekun of Outreach Hospital, who spoke with *Saturday Sun*, explained that the baby had breathing problem which they battled all through the night to control. "It is rare for a premature baby to survive because there must have been a problem that led to the child being born earlier. When he was rushed in to our hospital, we did all we could to save his life.

"The best thing is for the family to go for an autopsy to have a clear understanding of what really happened. Chika's placenta detached from the baby and the unborn child was breathing on its own inside his mother's womb. We thank God that Chika did not bleed to death before the doctors on duty discovered that", she stated.

She advised that proper medical check-up should be done on Chika to correct the damage that could have been done.

Take me to my son, Chika insists

Back to Safe Hands Hospital where Chika looked well and happy. She told her sisters that she wanted to be relocated to the hospital where her baby was. "Take me to my son. I need to see my son. Police did not succeed in taking him away from me. I am so happy. I will take him abroad to see his father", she stood up pacing around frantically trying to

pick her bags.

As at press time, she had, however, been informed of the death of her baby and transferred to another hospital for proper medical examination. "She has not stopped crying. Our major concern at the moment is how to save her life. We had to transfer her to another hospital that is not under the jurisdiction of Satellite police station. It appears that the doctors are afraid of the police, that is why they lied. If our sister did not start bleeding from her vagina, she would have bled to death. We thank God for her life," one of the relatives who spoke to *Saturday Sun* on phone said.

They will be prosecuted if found culpable -Police

Confirming the incident, Lagos State Police Command spokesman, Kenneth Nwosu, a deputy superintendent of police (DSP), assured that investigation was ongoing to ascertain what actually transpired. He said the suspected policemen had been arrested and were in detention, adding that they would be prosecuted according to the law guiding the force.

"The Nigerian police has a procedure which will be followed in ensuring that the suspects will be disciplined", he added.