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Agony without end

— 26th April 2016

He broke his leg while rushing to collect his mother-in-law's body from the morgue; then his wife died as he languished in the hospital. Now, with no job or money to feed himself and five kids, man needs urgent surgery to save his decaying leg.

By Job Osazuwa

FOR Mr. Samuel Okocha, life has not been a bed of roses. On the contrary, in the past 15 years, his body and soul have been deeply tormented by unpalatable circumstances.

Life couldn't have been crueller to this father of five from Uru Ogidi town in idemili Local Government Area of Anambra State. Having lost his job while preparing for his wedding, he picked up the pieces, engaged in different menial jobs and

managed to have the wedding eventually.

Less than three years into his marriage, his mother-in-law was knocked down by a vehicle at Shogunle bus stop, along Agege Motor Road in Lagos. Though she was quickly rushed to the hospital by sympathisers, she gave up the ghost shortly after.

But more trouble was brewing. He told the reporter that he loved his late mother-in-law and wanted to do what he could for the woman to get a befitting burial. On the day the family was to travel to his wife's hometown in Imo State for the burial, Okocha was hit by a motorcycle while walking along the Obafemi Awolowo Way in Ikeja, leaving his left femur (thigh bone) badly injured. He said the rider pleaded with him and he allowed the man to go.

Unknown to him, the wounded leg would later make life so miserable for him and his children.

"The problems were just too much for only me that I got confused, and I sometimes ask myself whether I was born to face troubles and to also die in pain. No, they are too much," he told the reporter, slowly shaking his head pathetically.

According to him, from the accident scene on Awolowo Way, he limped to the hospital where other family members were already waiting for him. After explaining the reason for the delay and paying the mortuary bills, they all left.

He recalled that soon after, he started experiencing sharp pains in his injured leg. He said he later became unconscious and wasn't aware when they got to Imo.

He said after arriving in Imo, he was quickly rushed to a nearby health centre for treatment. It was there that the doctor discovered that his femur was dislocated. At this time, he couldn't walk anymore. In fact, he could not even attend the burial, he told the reporter.

When he left the hospital and the pain did not abate, he was advised to visit a popular female traditional bonesetter in his hometown in Anambra State. He spent one week at the woman's 'clinic,' drinking herbal mixtures and robbing concoctions on the affected leg. But the leg did not improve.

"While I was with the woman, someone advised me to go to a government hospital to carry out an x-ray on the leg. I did, and the result of the x-ray revealed that the bonesetter was doing more damage to my leg," he said.

He was later taken to the Enugwu- Ukwu General Hospital (EGH), Anambra State, where the leg was operated on. But he said that was not the end of his predicament. Okocha recollected that he spent over two months at the hospital without any significant improvement. He was later discharged and advised to get crutches to aid his movement.

Said he: "When things didn't improve, another operation had to be done on my leg in 2005 at a Catholic hospital in Awka, Anambra. The doctor inserted an implant in the leg. At the early stage, it appeared the leg was getting better. But not too long after, it began to give me problems again.

"The pain was so much that in 2008, I had to visit the Igboi Orthopaedic Hospital in Lagos. I was asked to undergo another operation there. They told me the implant was wrongly fixed and needed to be corrected. In 2009, I had another surgery at Igboi and another implant was fixed in my leg."

At this point, Okocha said, he had literally turned to a beggar. He told the reporter that he was going about seeking help from friends in order to pay his hospital bills and feed his family.

He said he was still on admission at Igbobi when his supportive wife and the mother of his five children, Glory, died mysteriously in 2009.

Right now, Okocha is emotionally and psychologically shattered. The trauma is written all over him, as he struggled to put his sad tale in the right chronological order.

Recalling how his wife died, he said: "My wife was with me at Igbobi hospital for sometime until I told her to go home and look after our children. I told her I could cope. She left and didn't come to check me for about two weeks. When I tried reaching her on her telephone line, it didn't go through. I began to panic and I insisted on seeing her. My relatives were telling me different stories just to calm me down.

"When my doctor discharged me, I didn't see my wife at home. When they broke the news to me that my wife was in the mortuary, it sounded like a joke. I wept like a baby for days.

"They said my wife shouted in the toilet in the middle of the night that some invincible object pierced her heart. Our neighbours ran there and found her in pains. They rushed her to the hospital but she died before arriving there. She left me with my one leg to cater for our five children. Our last born was just four years when my wife left us."

After the wife's demise, he said hunger unleashed terror on his family. The kids' education was no longer consistent and so many other things fell apart in his home.

According to him, a friend pitied him and helped him get a security job at a residential house so that he could use the meagre salary to feed his family. The job was a saving grace for him, he confessed.

But his leg problem has not finally been solved. Okocha said he is still in need of N300,000 to undergo another round of surgery at Igbobi. He said he had been assured that it would be the final surgery on the leg.

"Just yesterday, someone came to take one of my children to stay with her, as a houseboy. It has not been easy for me. My salary is not enough to feed all of us, let alone attend to other basic needs. My first child has completed her secondary education, but there is no money to continue with her education.

"I want Nigerians to help me raise the money so that I can go for the final surgery. The doctor said if they remove the implant, I can walk again without using crutches. Then I can be more useful to myself, my family and my community," he stated.

Anyone that could be of help may reach Okocha on 08051707175 or 08065485817.

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