

From LAIDE RAHEEM,
Abeokuta

DREAM CUT SHORT

▶ Story of lone survivor of auto crash that killed 17 passengers ▶ Now in need of help

WHEN the then 29-year-old Bisola Funmilayo Akinsola got a job offer in Abuja in 2013 after her one-year mandatory post graduation national service, it was not only a dream come true, but a passport and visa out of poverty. But the young lady's dream was aborted as she was involved in a ghastly auto crash on her way to Abuja, to resume the new job!

Sad twist

The accident was fatal: Out of the 18 passengers inside the Abuja-bound commuter bus, 17 lost their lives, burnt beyond recognition by flames which engulfed the ill-fated vehicle after it somersaulted. Bisola alone survived.

Lucky Bisola, one would say. Yes, perhaps. She survived the crash, but with multiple injuries, which included 15-degree burns, particularly on her gluteal region (buttocks), burnt toes and a twisted ankle. She also had a pelvic dislocation and deep laceration with broken glasses inside the left thighs, fractured tibio-fibula on the left leg and severe burns on the right leg. And for the past four years, all the young accounting graduate has known and contended with is pain, pain, pain and excruciating pain, even as she remains bed-ridden!

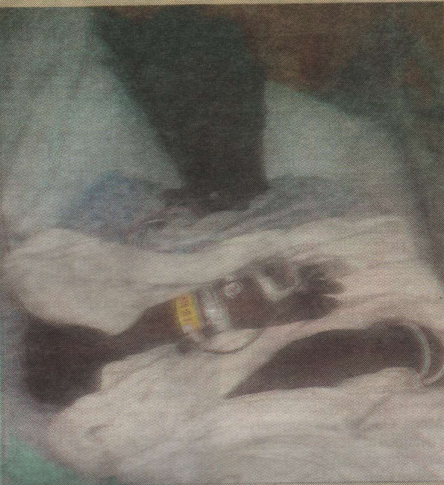
When *Saturday Sun* correspondent visited the Osun State-born graduate from The Polytechnic, Ibadan, at her 18, Prince Adewale Street, Ijoko Road, Sango-Ota area of Ogun State, he met her still writhing in pains, despite series of previous medical treatment and surgeries to alleviate her suffering and make her walk. After the formal introduction, Bisola, asked for a few minutes to inject herself with a painkiller she identified as Pentazocine, otherwise known as Fortuine, to mitigate the pain, which according to her, returned every four hours.

Bisola had, had to learn how to administer the prescriptions, which wear off four hours after each session, herself, when the cost of a nurse coming everyday to inject and give her the medications became unaffordable.

Ill-fated journey

"When I got the job offer, I was full of joy and had hoped that my parents' struggles to eke out a living had come to an end. So on the 3rd of February, 2013, accompanied by my friend, Funke, I left Lagos for my school in Ibadan, to get my certificate because of the job. But we could not get it that day as the time was fast spent before we got to school. We were asked to come back the next day. When we got to school on the next day, my friend was able to get her own result, but I was told that a document was missing in my file, therefore, I wouldn't be able to get my own."

"I had to go and meet one of my lecturers who pleaded on my behalf and assured them at the academic and record office that I would bring the docu-



BISOLA

ment later. But before we could do this, time had gone again for them to process anything. They just asked me to come for it the next day. There and then, I just decided and told my friend that we should leave for Abuja very early on February 5th and I made arrangement on how the result would be posted to me later in Abuja.

"In order to get to Abuja in the daytime, we boarded an early morning bus at Two Road motor park in Ibadan. But we had not travelled for more than 20 minutes, exactly at Asejire, when the 18-passenger bus had an accident. What I could recollect was that we were all chatting and looking forward to arriving at our destination safely, when a truck overtook our bus and in our driver's attempt at maneuvering the vehicle, the bus hit a boulder on the road and the vehicle began to somersault. That was when I passed out and I was told later the bus went up in flames, having landed on the other side of Ibadan-Life Expressway."

Fighting for life

It was later when she came around at the emergency unit of the University Teaching Hospital, (UCH) Ibadan, where the rescue team of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) took her to, that she discovered she had been badly burnt.

"The FRSC team that rescued me took me to the UCH and dumped me at the emergency room for 23 hours and 45 minutes before I was transferred to the burns unit department. I was in this unit for a couple of months before I was transferred to the general ward 'South West 1' but along the line, the wounds were infected."

"Despite several surgeries, there was no improvement, instead it got worse and I was given the impression that I could not survive such complicated case. It was a lot of spending and if I could recollect correct-

ly, my parents must have spent close to N4m, and this made my mother to go bankrupt. And for my dad, all his retirement benefits as a retired Assistant Superintendent of Police were all expended."

The India experience

After seven months at UCH, the patient requested for a referral due to what she called ill treatment and intimidation, as well as suggestion for the amputation of her leg and a colostomy. She vehemently protested against it.

Unable to be admitted at the Lagos State Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) due to a doctors' strike and dearth of beds at the burns unit as at then, she was taken round a couple of private hospitals before eventually being flown to Ganga Medical Centre, Coimbatore in South India.

Due to the wound infections, decaying flesh around her buttocks had to be cut.

Gov Aregbesola steps in

But help came her way when the Osun State governor, Ogburni Rauf Aregbesola, sent some money for her treatment in India.

"After spending eight months and a sum of \$12,500 on treatment in India, I was returned to Nigeria with a referral for continuation of my treatment in the United States of America. Like he did while I was in India, Governor Aregbesola, through his SSG, Olajide, sent some money for my treatment in the United States. I was at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio and had encounters with different surgeons before it was concluded that I had to be referred to an orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. John Sontich, before I could have plastic and podiatry surgeries. All this while, I was bed-

ridden and always had to lie on my chest," Bisola added.

Doctor Sontich of Metro-health Clinic has assured that Bisola could walk again after the procedure which will be carried out with a device -Taylor spatial frame -that will be fixed to her knee and a rod to her foot separately, to fuse the ankle for three months. The procedure was eventually carried out at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Youngstown in the State of Ohio at the rate of \$30,300; with her congregation, New Song Church financially supporting the patient.

Battle with pains

According to Bisola, about \$60,000 was spent on this and other surgeries such as podiatry to fix the burnt toes and removal of stone in her bladder. The expenses, however, excluded those on physical therapy, medications, x-rays, tests, doctors' visits, transportations, accommodation and feeding.

Although she had started practising to walk after being bedridden for over three years and after the injuries begun to heal following her return home, the pains she undergoes daily are, in her words, unbearable. She is virtually living on pain killers, which, according to her, was even becoming inadequate to ameliorate the severe pains.

Plea for help

About N29 million stands between her and the needed surgeries. Her parents have sold virtually all their assets in order to raise money to sustain her medication and treatment at an orthopaedic specialist hospital on Victoria Island in Lagos, monthly.

"Although I still have pending bills to settle before leaving the United States for Nigeria, which has to be defrayed because it is on my medical records. I have three more surgeries to undergo to make me whole again. These pending surgeries ought to have been done since April/June 2017, but my parents don't have this huge money or capacity again. They have sold and spent virtually all they have. I am in lot of pains, agony, anguish and depression."

"I still need a sum of N28,096,000 for treatment. Please I need good people of Nigeria to come to my aid, my health is deteriorating and I'm getting scared. If I could survive third degree deep dermal burns, multiple injuries, multiple fractures, pelvic dislocation and many more, please I don't want to die when the battle is almost over."

"I also need prayers in all ramifications of my life. I need both spiritual and financial assistance as soon and fast as possible. I am really tired of this condition. Please come to my rescue", she concluded in an emotion-laden voice.