

Born into hell

► Heartbreaking story of five months old boy whose parents were murdered by herdsmen ► Now being raised by his poor granny, breastfed by a good Samaritan

8th June 2019

0
SHARES

166
VIEWS

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter

Linus Oota, Lafia

By the time many people realized that the world is a cruel, cold place, they would have passed through the innocent epoch of childhood and are well into the storms of adolescence or the struggles and the general vicissitude of adulthood. This was not the case with Success John. He was barely born into this world when a cruel fate befell him. He would grow up to hear the bitter story of how his tribulation started when he was barely three months old, on a day his parents were celebrating his naming ceremony, brimming with the joy of a newborn who is, in fact, their first child. That was the day he was orphaned.

Tragedy had struck in the form of killer herdsmen with AK-47 rifles who swooped on the Numa-kuchim village in Andaha community of Akwanga Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, leaving in their wake blood, tears and swift but brutal death. That mortal attack of April 14, 2019, at 9 pm, left 18 dead, including the parents of Success, Mr and Mrs Adegbayo John.

The burden of raising a three-month orphan

Now, the burden of raising the infant falls on the shoulders of his grandmother—the mother of his late father, who unfortunately is ill-equipped at this stage of her life for such a gargantuan responsibility. Granny Rakiya, 50, speaking to our correspondent, recounts how she is coping with the infant who is now five months old. She complains of lack of money, meaning she could not afford to buy the usual infant feeding formula. At her wit's end, she had resorted to pleading with a nursing mother in the village who now breastfeed both her own child and little Success John.

Overall, theirs is a precarious existence. Rakiya herself, presently living in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp at Living Faith Church Akwanga with the little boy, has been through a vicissitude that left its mark clearly on her physical appearance. She is a picture of a grief-weary woman, a soul in perpetual torment from a cocktail of painful feelings—sadness, despair, helplessness, loneliness, abandonment and an obsessive death wish, to escape the unbearable condition life has foisted on her. Occasionally, when grief overwhelms her, she relapses into hysterics.

Speaking through an interpreter, the grief-stricken woman gives a brief recount of that Black Sunday when death came knocking and the messengers of death dispatch her family to the great beyond.

According to her, prior to the murder of her son and his wife, Rakiya, who lived with the couple, claims the victims had been on good terms with their alleged killers. “We lived together with them without any problem, we even invited them for the naming ceremony, they attended and ate the rice we cooked before turning around to kill them.”

She digresses and launches into a scathing lament about the pain of womanhood, of the labour a woman passes through to bring a child to this world only for her life to be cut short, thereby robbing her of the right of seeing to the upbringing of her child.

“It is not easy, I lost my husband many years ago and have been living with my only son,” she cries. “He was everything to me. He was my husband, my father, the breadwinner of the family; he farmed to take care of me; he worked very hard to get married two years ago; this is their first child and now they are no more to see him grow up.”

Even in her rage, it is not difficult to discern her real fear. She fears for the future of the child.

The Good Samaritan

She solemnly outlines the scope of the responsibility that became hers by default: “I bath him, wash his clothes, I do everything, while the other woman breastfeeds him when he is hungry. I thank this woman for accepting the child to suck her breasts. It is not easy for her breasting two children; she needs to be feeding well, but there is no food, no money to do that, we are all living at the mercy of the Living Faith Church members here in Akwanga. We can’t go back to the village. It is risky, the place is not safe yet.”

For both granny and her grandson, life couldn’t have been more precarious as they were stranded without means of survival. For this reason, Rakiya cannot thank God enough for the woman’s kindness, who so far has been the reason the five months old is still alive. “It is only God that will reward the woman for this,” she prays.

Uncertain future

Who will help me take care of this boy? That was the cry from the bereaved 50-year-old as she loudly bemoans her fate to Saturday Sun. “Where will I get money to train him when he grows up? I have neither strength to farm again nor money to pay labourers to do the farm work for me. I don’t even have the time to do any other thing other than taking care of the boy, he is too young.”

So great is her grief that two months after the tragedy, Rakiya is still inconsolable, living in denial that the couple is gone and never to return.

I am not yet recovered from the shock of the loss, she told Saturday Sun.

“I sit and cry all night long. My late son and his wife were very young. They were very good to me, I had never seen such a good-hearted wife, she was very giving, very caring, and very loving,” says Rakiya.

Out of breath with grief, she pauses, then plunges into fits of delirium: “Now I keep thinking, why did it happen? Is it my fault? Many times, I think perhaps God did that to punish me—and I often ask God: “Why?” But who am I to question God? How can God punish me to this extent? My only son left me so early and there is nobody to take care of me; worse still, he left behind a little boy. What will I tell this boy when he grows up? They left me with a five months old boy; every time I look at him, the pain gets deeper. I used to think I was a strong

woman, but now I realised I am not strong at all. I am just pushing through each day.”

She continues poignantly: “I guess God needed them in heaven. How I wish He had given them little time to raise their son to a level before departing!”

Living without the deceased, she says, is so painful it is “like living inside a coffin while still alive.”

“Every day I wish this pain would go away, but it is just getting stronger. It is hard to fall asleep, the pain is unbearable. I cry several times a day,” she tells this correspondence. “And the little boy cries with me throughout the night.”

She re-echoes her biggest worry: “I don’t know how I am going to survive with him. Is there anybody out there who can help me?”



Rapheal

Related Posts

FEATURES

AAU Ekpoma: The Prof. Onimawo feat in 3 years

10th June 2019

FEATURES

Ramaphosa and challenge of xenophobic attacks

10th June 2019

FEATURES

My mum could turn just vegetables and onions into mouth watering dish –Dr Ogbanga, Community Development Specialist

9th June 2019