

How young mother of 3 was electrocuted

4th May 2022 in Lifeline

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From **Rose Ejembi**, Makurdi

As much as Obera Emmanuel tried to conceal his agony while pacifying his two months old baby, Solomon, a few tears dropped from his eyes and betrayed his emotions.

In pain, he asked how his wife, who was hale and hearty only a moment earlier, would be pronounced dead just eight minutes after they both spoke on telephone.



Solomon with grandmother

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Although Emmanuel didn't direct the question to anyone in particular, sympathizers who had gathered to commiserate with him at his family house, located behind NUJ House in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, could not help but wail with him.

On Sunday, April 24, 2022, Emmanuel's wife, Mishack, was reportedly electrocuted at their apartment on Ter Guma Street, North Bank, Makurdi.

Narrating what happened, the father of three said they had all woken up as a family, had their morning prayers and engaged in other things without any inkling of the calamity that was ahead that day.

He said: "I am a businessman from Olamaboro Local Government Area of Kogi State but live on 8th Avenue, off Ter Guma Street, in North Bank, Makurdi, the Benue State capital. My wife's name is Mishack Obera. We were married for almost six years.

"On May 6, 2022, we would have been six years in marriage before death snatched her from me. She was a seamstress. We have three kids, a girl and two boys. The last baby, Solomon, was born only two months ago.

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"On that Sunday morning, we all woke up and prayed together. Thereafter, I took our two-months-old son from her to allow her take a little nap before she started doing house chores. That's what we did every morning.

"So, the baby boy was with me while she rested a little bit. Then she woke up to cook something for us all to eat. At some point, while she was still cooking, both the baby and I fell asleep. After sometime, we woke up and by that time the food she was making was ready. So, I ate with one of my neighbours, a soldier.

"Afterwards, we stayed and chatted till around 1pm and I prepared and went for a family meeting in town. While I was still at the family meeting, at about 4:52pm, my wife called me and said I should get baby diapers and yogurt on my way home, if I had cash and I said okay.

"I left the meeting around 5pm for my family house behind NUJ on Ankpa Road. I got there and met my dad and my brother in the compound and we were talking and laughing. Less than 10 minutes after I spoke to my wife and got to the family house, one of my neighbours called and asked where I was and I told him I was in town. He then told me that my baby was crying inside the room and my wife was lying on the ground in the room and the room was locked.

"He then said anywhere I was I should start coming back home. So, I told him that I was in town and would be coming home immediately but, instead of waiting for me to return, they should break the door and see what was happening.

"After dropping the phone, I told my dad what my neighbour just told me. I said I just spoke with my wife eight minutes earlier, how come they were now calling me that something was wrong with her?"

Emmanuel said after breaking the door to gain entrance into the room, neighbours rushed his wife to the hospital for medical assistance while he immediately left his family house to meet them at the hospital.

“They then told us to meet them at General Hospital, North Bank, but when we got there, the nurses referred us back to St. Theresa’s Hospital in town. When I got to St. Theresa’s Hospital, I saw my wife inside a tricycle already dead,” he said and broke down in tears.

Asked what doctors said was the matter with his wife, the young widower said the doctors didn’t admit her because she was brought in dead.

“But when I went home, some of my neighbours ushered me into my apartment, and there we saw that the pressing iron was plugged to the wall and the cloth she was sewing throughout the night was arranged on the chair. So, it’s possible she was ironing the cloth when there was a power surge.

“Many people in my area said when the light was restored that evening, the current was very high and fluctuating. My neighbour who ate together with me earlier that day confirmed this and said he even experienced a shock that evening in his room too.”

When asked if he had any premonition or ever dreamt that death was lurking around his family, Emmanuel said he never had such premonition at all.

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“Nothing of such. Even that very day, if anyone had told her that she would die, I don’t think she would believe it. Imagine somebody who called me at 4:52pm only to be found dead in our room eight minutes later.

“In fact, she had arranged things to bathe our baby. I’m sure it was while she was arranging to bathe our baby that they restored the light and she tried to quickly use the opportunity to iron the cloth she was sewing and got killed in the process.

“Even the black soap she uses to bathe our baby was already opened and the bath water was already mixed. Her own cloth that she had planned to wear after bathing the baby was already arranged on the bed too.

“She usually bathed the baby first, then took her own bath and both of them would go and rest in the room. So, there’s no way that any of us would have known that death would happen to her that day.

He regretted that since the sad incidence, no staff of Jos Electricity Distribution (JED) Company had come to visit them.

“I wouldn’t know whether they went to North Bank to see our caretaker while I was away because since the incidence, I have been at my family house. I live in a one bedroom flat at North Bank.

“I will miss everything about her. She was my world. She was my friend, my jist partner and my lover. We were even planning how our sixth wedding anniversary would be that Saturday night before the incidence.

“We were also planning to take the baby to church next month for dedication when he will be three months old. In fact, we planned to grow old together and take care of our children. We didn’t plan for sudden death of any one of us.

“Coping with Solomon has been stressful and it has been very difficult for me. We both planned to do baby friendly (exclusive breastfeeding) for him.

“My mother is the one taking care of the baby since the demise of my wife. It’s been difficult for the baby also because transiting from breast milk to baby milk hasn’t been easy for him. Since his mother passed on, the baby has not been able to go to toilet as he used to go before because his system is still trying to adjust. He is going through a lot right now.”

Emeka Anyaogu, a neighbour whose house is just opposite where the incidence happened confirmed that there was power surge that evening, which affected many people, including his own daughter.

He said: "The day the incident happened, Emmanuel's wife was sitting with other women under the tree in front of my house. Later, she entered inside her room to bath her baby. It was while she was inside the room that light was restored.

"As soon as the light was restored, everyone on the General Hospital axis of North Bank noticed the high voltage and some even confirmed that they experienced shock in their various homes. Even my daughter had a shock too.

"That's why we all believe that she died from shock as a result of power surge."

Anyaogu, who recalled the recent power surge at the Wadata area of Makurdi in which nine people were killed and many others injured, appealed to JED to rise up to its responsibility of safeguarding their transformers to stop unnecessary loss of lives in the state.

"We are using this medium to call on JED to do the needful and attend to the light issue. We are suspecting that the power surge must have come from the transformer that supplies light to that immediate environment.

"You would recall that the same thing happened in Wadata not too long ago, resulting in the death of many people and some are still battling with injuries sustained from that incidence. In North Bank also, a soul has gone. That's why we are calling on JED to do the needful," he said.

Efforts to get JED's Regional Manager, Felix Adamu, to comment on the matter failed as calls put through to his phone line was neither picked nor returned.

Also, when contacted, the state police public relations officer, Catherine Anene, could not confirm the report.