

Sad end for akara seller

...Crushed to death at roadside trading point in Uyo



Scene of accident that claimed the life Mma Akara

From Isaac Job, Uyo

A widow selling akara, popularly known as Mma Akara, along Nung Oku junction in Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State, never had any premonition that roadside trading would lead to her untimely death. A Toyota Camry car summersaulted into her shed and crushed her to death, leaving her daughter unconscious at the scene.

Eyewitness said the vehicle veered off the road and summersaulted three times before it smashed the victim, while neighbours scamped for safety.

It was gathered that the incident occurred a few hours after the chairman of Uyo Capital City Development Authority (UCCDA), Hon. Anietie Eka, visited the same spot to chase traders away, begging them to relocate inside government approved markets in the city.

The task force on street trading constituted by Uyo Capital City Development Authority has been in a running battle with traders, who abandoned their stalls and sheds in the market to cluster around junctions and roadsides to display wares.

From Ibom Plaza, IBB Junction, Ikot Ekpene Road, by Uniuoyo fence, Itam Market to Nung Oku Junction within Uyo metropolis, traders are found sitting close to the main road selling various items such as foodstuff, fruits, fairly used clothes and sachet drinks, among others.

UCCDA had embarked on aggressive campaigns and demolition of illegal structures erected by the traders but they continued to rebuff government orders.

At Ibom Plaza, it took UCDA more than one year to drive street traders away to pave way for renovation work. The area was a beehive of illicit businesses such as drug trafficking, prostitution, gambling and con men loitering around, seeking



Ekah with members of the task force on street trading

unsuspecting persons to deal with.

Ekah, while begging the sellers to leave the road, said: "The government's directive was not an act of insensitivity to the economic situation in the country but a responsibility to safeguard lives and property."

He reminded them that no profit made on the roadside was worth a human life. All the pleas fell on deaf ears, till the car summersaulted in Mma Akara's stand. And the woman died.

While speaking with our reporter on the fatal accident involving the akara seller, Ekah said government would continue to send street traders to occupy their place in the designated markets for their safety.

He said: "People are very stubborn, not minding the risk of selling at roadsides. We just finished begging them to relocate but they ignored government's order and continued to stay there."

"The accident that occurred has vindicated government's action to drive traders away from roadsides to main markets in the city."

"We have Itam Market, Urua Akpan Andem, Urua Okpokpo, Urua Afaha, Urua Nung Udoo

and other markets built by government; traders refused to stay there but insisted on selling by roadsides. This is the consequences of street or roadside trading."

The body of the deceased was deposited in the mortuary, while the daughter was rushed to hospital.

Traders who spoke with Daily Sun in Uyo said they will continue to remain by the roadside due to multiple levies and taxes by market unions.

One of the traders blamed government agencies that could not checkmate the activities of touts who collect all sorts of tolls from them.

"At Itam Market, we pay several levies to market associations, local and state governments as well as street urchins. Where is our profit?", she asked rhetorically.

She said government should address the issue of too many levies and curtail the excesses of market unions so that poor people can leave the street and roadsides and sell in the market.

"Chasing traders away from the roads is not enough. They should check the activities of market unions and multiple ticketing by local and state government officials," she said.