

Death Trap in Lagos

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Pedestrians risking it across either side of the Iyana-Itire Junction along Oshodi-Apapa Expressway



With the constant loss of lives to road accidents at Iyana-Itire junction along the Oshodi-Apapa Expressway, Ikenna Ekwerike writes on what has become a nightmare for motorists

For many, the name 'Iyana-Itire' represents death and everlasting sorrow. For others who are familiar with the terrain, Iyana-Itire is a call for utmost watchfulness and patience geared towards personal road safety.

In recent times, the Iyana-Itire Bus Stop, located between Ilasa Bus Stop and the popular Cele Bus Stop along the ever busy Oshodi-Apapa Expressway, Lagos, has

become notorious for preventable road accidents that have forcefully snuffed life out of many, leaving others with permanent disabilities and disfiguring scars.

But beyond the copious loss of lives, accidents at this junction have exposed, sadly, how much of their humanity Lagosians have lost in the era of digital photography on smart phones and the addictive social networks.

As it is always the case, incidences in Lagos are typically greeted with mammoth onlookers who gather, basically, to catch a first-hand glimpse of whatever happened. No doubt, even in the past, majority of such onlookers were always there to satisfy curiosity and this earned them the title of 'Lagos lookers'. Yet, volunteers to offer first aid to the victims, in the case of an accident, were never lacking.

Nowadays, not only are helpers scarce, but even the often huge curious crowd that gathers in a twinkling of the eye as soon as the event breaks is taking a most disturbing turn. There is complete indifference to the plight of victims. Not only do they engage their natural eyes, they equally employ their digital eyes which are capable of capturing and transmitting the event, instantly, to the virtual world.

They seem to revel in the glamour of technology and the selfish psychological gratification comments from such posts will generate when posted on social media platforms at the expense of a fellow human's life.

However, Mr. Ogbonna Enwere, a spare parts dealer at the Ilasa Mechanic Village from Umuahia in Abia State, chose to stand out from the unfeeling crowd on that unhappy day in August 2017 when a vehicle coming from Oshodi towards Apapa rammed into four commuters who were waiting by the concrete demarcation to cross the second lane of the expressway at Iyana-Itire Junction killing three persons on the spot.

"When I got to the scene I noticed that every other person was busy taking pictures of the victims even when it was obvious that two out of the four were still moving and needed urgent attention. I felt we should help them since the police and road safety officials were not around.

"So, I immediately rushed to carry one of the girls but couldn't lift her alone. So I called others to help me but I was shocked at the responses they gave. They were saying that

others had died and that she was most likely going to die too due to her condition which was really critical,” Enwere narrated.

The only way Enwere could get help from the crowd of photographers was to claim that the victim was his relative. At first, a man volunteered to assist him but on discovering that the two legs of the girl had been completely shattered, he quietly dropped her and backed off.

“It was only then that one well-dressed lady pushed her way through the crowd and joined me to carry her. Funny enough, the keke operators started to run away instead coming to help us carry her to the hospital,” Enwere added.

While it seems obvious that the culture of fellow-feeling is fast eroding, it is still simply unimaginable why a crowd of humans; men and women; boys and girls; Christians and Muslims alike would pass the death sentence on another just because he or she was involved in an accident that had left him or her badly injured and probably, unconscious.

Perhaps, two of the victims of that accident would have been saved had the crowd been a sympathetic one. Aside the girl whom Enwere rushed to the hospital, the only male among the victims was said to be battling for survival and was practically begging to be assisted to live. But the crowd heartlessly pronounced him dead and unfortunately he died.

When this reporter visited the only surviving victim of that accident, he noticed that she was in a very stable condition having spent three months in a private orthopaedic facility where her broken legs are being tended. She declined media publicity but full of thanks to God for her life.

Sadly, human blood continues to flow, unabated, at Iyana-Itire bus stop. A recent incident occurred in the afternoon hours of Thursday, October 19, 2017 on the same spot where previous ones had been alleged to have happened. The accident claimed the life of a young man, who was also waiting by the concrete demarcation to cross the second lane of the expressway when a lorry driver lost control of his vehicle.

Unfortunately, some of the accidents at that spot are not unconnected with the reckless activities of commercial bus drivers, popularly called ‘danfo drivers’, who often stop right in the middle of the expressway to either pick up passengers or get them off.

"I just heard a very loud sound of a burst tyre and then saw the lorry wobbling down. It hit the concrete demarcation and stopped but I didn't go to see when people started shouting that it had killed someone because I'm afraid of blood," said Kola Tijani, a tricycle operator at the junction.

Another eyewitness, Adegboyega Collins, lamented that the Iyana-Itire Junction had become frightfully dangerous for commuters.

He said, "The rate at which we witness accidents on that very spot where this one happened now is alarming.

"Less than two months ago, one vehicle ran into four people who were waiting to cross the second lane on that same spot and three out of the four died instantly and the other one was rushed to the hospital. No one knows if she survived it."

For Tayo Jamiu, who also witnessed the accident, the only solution to the unwarranted loss of lives at Iyana-Itire Junction would be the erection of a pedestrian bridge.

While the pedestrian bridge option might be a long term solution to the problem, some have suggested government takes certain immediate steps towards arresting the situation part of which should be the posting of traffic officials to the junction to enforce traffic laws and ensure the safety of lives.

It is worthy of note that the nearest pedestrian bridge to the junction which is at Hassan Bus Stop just before Ilasa Bus Stop is about 15 poles away.

Traders at Hassan Bus Stop where the bridge is situated, Rosemary and Mrs. Abayomi Sola, attest that road hazards were not very common there compared to what happens at Iyana-Itire. According to them, the unfortunate few who get involved in accidents at that bus stop are usually the stubborn people who will prefer to cross the roads rather than use the pedestrian bridge.