

thegallery

EDITED BY WALE AKINOLA

'ONE-WAY' DRIVING DEATH

Trouble as truck driver crushes LASU final year student

• We are cooperating with police - Company

BY ESTHER ONYEBULA

When 32-year-old Stainislus Ipogah went to school on Wednesday, January 28, little did he know that would be his last time in school as he was reportedly hit by a man driving against traffic along Lagos-Badagry Expressway.

Sunday Vanguard gathered that the final year student of Lagos State University (LASU) was hit by a DHL Supply Chain truck on his way back from school at Iba junction. "Immediately after the accident occurred, angry students attacked the truck driver identified as Adeboyejo Festus, a staff of DHL Supply Chain; but was later allowed to take the victim to hospital. When he got to a nearby hospital, the personnel said they didn't have enough equipment and that he should take him to another hospital", an eye witness narrated.

But instead of getting a vehicle to take the victim to another hospital, Festus reportedly went to the police station to report himself. Meanwhile, Stainislus condition was getting worse.

The driver returned with some police officer after several hours to meet the victim dead.

Narrating the incident, the elder brother of the deceased, Theodore Ipogah, said: "At about 1 pm on that fateful day, a call came to my phone that I should call the number. When I called the number, which happened to be my younger brother's own, the person who spoke to me said the owner of the phone had an accident, and, at the back ground,



'The errant truck. Inset: Stainislus ... dead

I heard people crying. The person said I should come to LASU, Iba junction and that they were taking him to hospital. I asked if he was dead and he said no. I asked what happened. He said a truck hit him and that the truck was driving one way when the accident happened. He said my brother has closed from school and was coming back when the accident happened.

"I was told that when they took him to hospital, the doctors said they didn't have enough equipment and that they should take him elsewhere. But instead, the errant driver went to the police station to report himself. When he came back after several hours, my brother had lost so much blood. He came back with some police officers, and they realised that the victim had passed on. Before I could get to Mile 2

from Lekki, the nurse called me and said my brother had died. When I came, I met some policemen at Iba junction, they had already taken the corpse from the hospital to the street where he lived close to Iba junction. That was where I met them".

Taking corpse to the morgue

"The police now advised that we take the corpse to the mortuary, which we did; we left the mortuary around 12 midnight. The police asked us to report at their office the next day by 8am. The next day, we went to the station and met two persons who claimed to be representatives of DHL. They sympathised with us, saying there was no amount of money they would give us that will bring back my late brother. We said we were

not there to make case. We told them the bill at the hospital and the mortuary which was about N98, 000.

"Later, we did the burial list which amounted to N960, 000. We gave the list to the company's representatives, and they said we should also talk about compensation and that we should have a family meeting. My brother, a legal practitioner, educated our family that it is civil case and that we should put something together as compensation. Even the police encouraged us to do so. So we put N35 million. The DHL representatives said they will get back to us. They next day they came to us and offered us N350, 000 for the burial. And we were like, is he an animal that was killed or a human being-- We told them that we needed a formal letter from the company addressed to the family of the victim, a final year student of computer science, LASU.

We told them that we could not take anything from the company without a letter from the company because our aged parents are in the village and need to know how their son died.

"Later, they called and said they had made available N500, 000 for the family. At this point, we decided to get the family lawyers involved in the case. The family lawyer wrote a letter to DHL not knowing that we have three different DHL companies operating in Nigeria. After they received the letter, they called the family and said the truck was not their own, that they were not aware of the accident. So, who were the people who had been meeting with our family? We even asked the alleged DHL representatives if they didn't have company policy regarding such issue at that time."

Theodore said that Stainislus was the seventh of ten children. The brother went on: "The deceased died struggling to make something out of life. As a student who was supposed to enjoy himself in school, he couldn't because his family didn't have the resources to give him that. He was not ashamed to engage in menial jobs to keep body and soul together. Now, he has been

killed by a careless driver. Although not married, Stainislus had a six year old son".

Theodore explained that the reason they decided to involve *Sunday Vanguard* in the matter was to let the whole world know how "they killed our brother". He added: "We have proof because the vehicle is a DHL branded truck and no amount of denial can change that. Except the company is alleging that the other company uses DHL branded trucks without their approval.

"As a family, we want them to compensate the family and also take full responsibility for the burial. We have not received one kobo from them. The police told us that the driver is in their custody".

Efforts to reach DHL

When *Sunday Vanguard* went to DHL head office at Isolo, Lagos, we were told that they have three sister companies operating under the name DHL. A human resources official there, who simply identified herself as Nkechi, said they don't use trucks to deliver services. She said it was not their truck that hit the victim. She, however, put a call through to their sister companies. She later asked us to contact one Mr Tolu of DHL Supply Chain. When we called Tolu, he said he was not in the position to comment on the issue and that his superiors would, and asked us to come to their office somewhere in Ikeja. We could not locate the office while efforts to subsequently reach Tolu were not fruitful as he simply refused to pick his calls.

Later, one Leigh Swartz, who identified herself as Marketing and Communications Manager, Sub-Saharan Africa, DHL Supply Chain South Africa (PTY) LTD, called *Sunday Vanguard* but there was poor network.

She later sent a mail which read: "DHL can confirm that one of its vehicles was involved in a fatal collision with a pedestrian, on Wednesday, 28 January 2015 at Iyana Iba, Lagos, Nigeria.

"We offer our deepest sympathies to the bereaved family and are cooperating fully with the police in their investigation. However, while the investigation is under way, we are unable to comment further, other than to confirm that road safety is of the utmost importance to the company."