



•Nkechi, daughter of the slain DCO

•Elizabeth Fasoro's daughter

Help us, don't let us drop out of school

- Children of two police personnel gunned down by robbers cry out
- Community, relations grief

Two police officers were among five victims killed by armed robbers who attacked a branch of a first generation bank close to the police station where they were serving before they were cut down by the men of the underworld. ODUNAYO OGUNMOLA reports on how their families are coping with the grief caused by the incident.

EVERY employee looks forward to the day of retirement when he is expected to receive his gratuity and other retirement benefits. David Onu Itumah was looking forward to his retirement from the police having had just three months to quit.

But fate had a different plan for him as he met his end in a very tragic circumstance. He was killed by armed robbers who stormed a first generation bank very close to the police station where he was serving.

Itumah was the Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) of the Nigeria Police, Afao Divisional Headquarters in Ikere-Ekiti, where he served diligently in nipping crime in the bud. The robbers also killed another policewoman, Iyabo Fasoro, a youth corps member, Miss Edith Oyinyechi Ugwuoke and two other civilians in the bloody attack on the bank.

An eyewitness said: "He didn't fall to the robbers' bullets. They shot him but that didn't work on him. He didn't have his rifle when they stormed his office; he ran into a corner of his office and locked himself in so that he could have enough time to prepare for them, but the robbers were too many for him. Over five of them must have broken into his office to grab him.

"They lifted his feet off the ground and shot him. That was when the bullet penetrated into his body and finished him".

The man had a very bad fate. He just had three months to retire from the police; it was after they finished him and succeeded in sending off every other officer that they

went for the police armoury in the office and emptied it", another eyewitness revealed.

Expectedly, the killing of Itumah had thrown his family into mourning as the burden of shouldering the responsibilities of seven children now falls on his wife who is a petty trader. Sharing his grief with *The Nation* on the gruesome death of his father on that fateful November 25, the daughter of the deceased, Miss Nkechi Itumah, described his father as the "best father in the world."

Nkechi, a 24-year-old Higher National Diploma (HND) student of the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, revealed that there was a time his father rejected a N2 million bribe for which he was given an award. Reliving her last moment with her father, Nkechi said she was still in shock to learn that the deceased who still gave him money for shopping few weeks earlier had been killed by hoodlums.

"My dad was the best father ever. If I happen to relive this life again, I would choose him as my father a million times.

I will miss him so much. He was very loving, tender and caring. We didn't lack anything, my father was the best and he didn't force us against our wish and even if he didn't feed well, he would make sure we all ate.

"Two weeks before they killed him, I called him to say that I was coming to Ekiti to get some clothing materials for the yuletide and also in preparation for resumption to school in January. My last moment was when he gave me some money to go for the shopping and I came back the following week. He was so full of life and still assured of his love for us. Little did I know that it was the last time I would see him alive."

My younger sister, who is studying Economics, has almost N200, 000 to pay in the coming session; our younger brother reading Law also has to pay over N200,000. Dad had assured us that even if it meant borrowing money and starving himself to death, he would ensure that we all got quality education to face our life. He even wished that some of us would finish our education and join the police force and become top shots there

When asked how the family is coming to terms with the unexpected absence of their breadwinner, Nkechi said the death of his father is a nightmare that would continue to haunt the family. "It has not been real for us; we are still pinching ourselves to be sure that dad has really gone. It has been very

difficult to accept it. My mother, Ngozi Itumah is 45; she is a petty trader in Auchi here. She is the only person struggling to sustain us. It is beginning to dawn on me that as the first born, I have got to tighten my belt now and fend for the family but I still have school fees to pay for a session.

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Nkechi urged the federal and state governments to assist the family of the deceased, especially in getting his entitlements in good time to take care of his dependants as the slain officer, according to his daughter, was once offered a bribe of N2 million, which he rejected.

She said: "My father was a very dedicated police officer. I saw an award he received for rejecting a N2 million bribe while going through his documents lately. That shows how dutiful he was. I want the Federal Government to ensure that he is not denied any of his entitlements, his pension and gratuity as early as possible and not to let his children drop out of school and they should put some of his children in the police force because this was his dream when he was alive.

"Moreso, I'm appealing to the government and anyone who is touched to come to our aid so that we won't drop out of school. My dad wanted the best for us irrespective of the cultural bias against educating the female child; my dad wanted all of us, especially, the girls, to get the best