

WISDOM BEHIND STAFF SCREENING AND VERIFICATION EXERCISE IN KOGI STATE

*Being the Presentation by Chief of Staff to Governor of Kogi State at the Stakeholders Meeting held
30th April 2017*

1.0 Long before His Adventure into politics, His Excellency, The Executive Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello took out time to carry out proper diagnosis of the problems that was bedeviling the State since its creation on the 27th August 1991 most especially in the following arrears

- High level of corruption and diversion of public funds into private pocket of few
- Absence of basic infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals.
- Lack of portable water
- Huge Arrears in salaries and pension to civil servants as well as pensioners running into hundreds of billions, leading to lack of productivity in the Service
- Over bloated salaries and pension wage bill, with names of non-civil servants loaded on the payroll as ghost workers
- High level of unemployment

1.1 The solution to these problems enumerated above were well entrenched in His Excellency's covenant with the good people of Kogi State, in His popular New Direction Blue Print, which has now transformed into New Direction Agenda, with key thematic areas as follows:

- ✓ Quality Education for all
- ✓ Affordable and Quality Health care for the people
- ✓ Provision of basic Infrastructure
- ✓ Youth engagement and employment generation as well as

✓ Civil Service and Pension Reform.

1.2 Knowing well that the Civil Service being the engine room of governance, without which it will be difficult for any Government to achieve its set objectives as well as any meaningful development, His Excellency did not delay in swinging into action as stakeholders were well consulted within a month of His assumption of Office, and on the 24th February 2016, a Committee for the Staff Screening and Verification Exercise was put in place, find below the status of public service of the State as at then.

SUMMARY OF EMPLOYEES BY MDAs, LGAs & LGEAs AND THEIR WAGE BILLS AS AT JANUARY 27, 2016			
S/N	Description (Categories of Staff)	Staff Number on Payroll	Monthly Wage Bill
1	State Ministries, Departments & Agencies (MDA's)	23,002	2,142,526,730.75
2	Local Governments Departments	25,313	1,348,096,281.99
3	Local Government Educational Authority (Teachers)	20,340	1,223,387,577.94
4	Local Government Educational Authority (Office)	3,110	187,056,802.72
5	State Government Pensioners	8,762	469,142,414.22
6	Local Government Pensioners	5,573	281,047,367.08
	Total	86,100	5,651,257,174.70
NOTE: THE FIGURE ABOVE EXCLUDE PUBLIC SERVANTS IN THE STATE JUDICIARY			

1.3 The Committee which report was submitted June 2016 was largely condemned as they were accused, especially the Chairman of the Committee, of high handedness, and exclusion of genuine civil servants from the exercise. This led to His Excellency constituting a review committee to take a second look at the report, and a lot of irregularities were uncovered and corrected.

The Review Committee submitted its report on 23rd December 2016 as summarised their findings below;

SUMMARY OF CATEGORY I GHOST WORKERS AS AT DECEMBER 1, 2016				
S/N	DESCRIPTION OF EMPLOYER	PUBLIC SERVANTS ON NOMINAL PAYROLL AS AT JANUARY 27, 2016	PUBLIC SERVANTS SCREENED AS AT DECEMBER 1, 2016	GHOST WORKER (CATEGORY 1)
1	MDAs	23,002.00	19,165.00	3,837.00
2	LGAs	25,313.00	22,979.00	2,334.00
3	LGEAs - TEACHERS	20,340.00	19,300.00	1,040.00
4	LGEAs - OFFICE	3,110.00	2,943.00	167.00
5	STATE PENSIONS	8,762.00	6,387.00	2,375.00
6	LG PENSIONS	5,573.00	5,501.00	72.00
	TOTAL	86,100.00	76,275.00	9,825.00
NOTE: THE STATE JUDICIARY PUBLIC SERVANTS WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS ABOVE				

From the Staff Screening & Validation Committee report, a total of 9,825 public servants who were on the nominal roll of MDAs as well as Local Government Areas (LGAs) failed to turn up for the screening exercise, which by implication were non-existing workers, thereby saving the State approximately **N644.9 Million monthly and N7.739 Billion annually**

The above is exclusive of 13,859 employees with various degrees of issues including double employment, multiple salaries, concurrent pension and Salary earners, Children of Politician on Payroll, Diaspora Workers, backdated employments, impersonations, Inherited employment as well as those employed for political gains late in 2015 and early 2016 etc, as summarized in the table below;

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SERVANTS WITH PROVEN CASES OF GROSS MISCONDUCT AS AT DECEMBER 1, 2016											
S/N	DESCRIPTION OF EMPLOYER	2015 & 2016 EMPLOYMENT	DIASPORA WOKERS	EMPLOYED WHILE IN SCHOOL	IMPROPER EMPLOYMENT	MANIPULATED EMPLOYMENT	FALSIFICATION OF RECORDS	ABSENCE FROM WORK WITHOUT LEAVE APPROVAL	FORGED ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES (VERIFICATION STILL ONGOING)	MINOR	ESTABLISHED GHOST (CATEGORY II)
1	MDAs	806	314	5	4	17	1,124	87	33	55	2,445
2	LGAs	711	567	33	56	128	3,081	490	116	435	5,617
3	LGEAs - TEACHERS	610	345	14	1,700	105	1,920	148	86	322	5,250
4	LGEAs - OFFICE	15	46	-	128	11	233	40	8	66	547
5	STATE PENSIONS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	LG PENSIONS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL	2,142	1,272	52	1,888	261	6,358	765	243	878	13,859

The losses attributable to this categories of ghost workers is about N875.6 Million monthly and N10.506 Billion annually.

Looking at 13 years of the previous administrations in the State, the Government (State & Local) has lost a colossal sum of **₦237,191,222,617.93** to **Ghost Workers/Unintended Beneficiaries**.

The negative effect of this avoidable monumental losses on the socio-economic development of the State can better be imagined. The over **₦237.2 Billion** that was fraudulently diverted into private pockets if properly channeled into the development of the State would have turned the socio-economic landscape of the State to the admiration of the whole nation and by extension the continent of Africa. This would have enabled the State to construct good roads, build health centers, schools and other necessary infrastructures lacking today in the State.

1.4 But as a Father of the State, and in the spirit of fair hearing, His Excellency gave listening ear to the cry and appeal by the stakeholders to set up an Appeal Committee.

The appeal is to give room to people with stale results that are ready to provide their original certificates and other relevant documents, or those who believe they have genuine reasons for taking certain actions which were considered inimical to the service by the staff screening & review committee, etc.

1.5 Hence, His Excellency, The Executive Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello set up an Appeal Committee on the 24th January 2017 headed by an astute administrator, from the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria Lagos, and supported by 35 other strong and committed members drawn from different walks of life including the leadership of organize labour, civil society group and religious groups (including but not limited to JNI, CAN, NLC, NULGE, NASU, JAC etc).

1.6 The Committee have taken pains to go through the rigor of the Appeal Exercise and have recently completed their mandate and the findings were mind boggling, some of the observed infractions were as follows;

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY NATURE OF PROBLEM (REVISED STATUS)	
S/N	NATURE OF REVISED PROBLEM
1	Absence from duty by proceeding on study before Confirmation of Appointment
2	Absence from work for Study (Full Time) without approval
3	Absence from work for study (Part Time) without approval, with a view to subsequently use academic certificate obtained for future career advancement
4	Absence from work to participate in one year NYSC programme without approval
5	Abuse of office resulting in undeserved financial benefits at the detriment of government
6	Alteration of date of birth (DOB) on birth certificate or statutory declaration of age (SDA) or First School Leaving Certificate
7	Certificate fraudulently obtained as staff cannot defend such certificates
8	Cloning of Statutory Declaration of Age (SDA). This is when there are different date of birth (DOB) for a statutory declaration of age dated the same date with same treasury receipt number. This is done to provide cover up for alteration of Date of Birth (DOB) or other age manipulation
9	Diasporal workers (Cheating the government by earning salary without working as evidence by consistent cash withdrawals in location outside the state or outside the staff primary place of assignment)
10	Collecting full salary after the due date of retirement
11	Contract staff on the payroll with or without specific tenure
12	Disparity in date of birth between records (e.g between statutory declaration of age and First School Leaving Certificate or West Africa Examination Council or Annual Performance Evaluation Report or Notification of Promotion)
13	Double salary
14	Employed and being paid salary while in the school or employed while on NYSC
15	Employed and promoted with 'Certificate Course', OD or HD (Non Accredited certificates). These certificates are only required for proficiency and not for career progression
16	Employed between January 1, 2015 to January 27, 2016
17	Employed by MDA/LGA/LGEA on GL07/1 above in breach of their statutory limit on appointment and promotion.
18	Employment or Secondment of trained Teacher to MDAs where their experience is being under utilised
19	Extension of study leave without approval
20	Fake or Forged academic certificate
21	FSLC (Primary School certificate) fraudulently obtained to cover up for age manipulation
22	Holding more than one full time paid job.
23	Huge and unexplained cash inflow or divided loyalty

S/N	NATURE OF REVISED PROBLEM (CONTINUED)
24	Impersonation
25	Improper career advancement and promotion
26	Involvement in non permissible business for a Public Servant or divided loyalty
27	Lack requisite academic qualification(s) upon which staff employment and promotion (s) was premised
28	Multiple Statutory Declaration of Age (SDA) with different dates of birth (DOB)
29	No evidence of earning salary (i.e no employment history) in the bank account statement provided by the staff for the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015 in breach of the screening guideline.
30	No Minimum Qualification for Teaching (i.e. Teacher without minimum of NCE)
31	Non-indigenes given permanent/pensionable employment
32	Permanent Secretary & Directors who have been in the position for 8 years
33	Staff employed and placed on grade level above his/her qualification
34	Staff employed and remained on the same grade since date of appointment to-date, meanwhile staff academic/profesional qualification and scheme of service provided for carrear advancement
35	Pensioner employed on Pensionable Appointment or Staff employed when above 50 years of age
36	Staff has attained the mandatory age of 60 years or has served for mandatory period of 35 years
37	Staff has record of misdemeanours e.g. truancy, lateness, rudeness, several queries, rape, stealing etc
38	Staff physically old or adjudged older than 60 years
39	Staff with visible disability or health challenge which may adversely affect the discharge of staff duty.
40	Statement of result submitted during employment or to earn promotion is stale (i.e has been issued more than five years) and no longer valid to remain in employment in line with Head of service circular with reference number KG/EST/CIR/8/VOL.III/918 of April 23, 2013.
41	Under Employment (Staff employed on lower grade when already having higher qualification and 'normalized' resulting in promotion before or at confirmation)
42	Underage Employment (i.e. Employed as a minor). Minimum age for employment to be categorised as follows: up to 20/03/1979 is 16 years; between 21/03/1979 to 24/08/2009 is 15 years and from 25/08/2009 to-date is 18 years
43	Staff has reached the limit of his/her cadre & academic/profesional qualifications and has stagnated on same grade for more than 8 years
44	Staff has instituted a case against the State Government in Industrial Abritation Court or National Industrial Court

IMPLICATION

The summary of the infractions or offences above amounts to gross misconduct and constitutes breaches of the Public Service Rules (PSR). The deliberate breach of the PSR and failure to enforce discipline as prescribed by PSR by people in position of authority is the fundamental reason for the level of decadence and rottenness within the State Public Service.

It is therefore not surprising that the productivity level of the State Public Service is near zero, yet salary payment has always been on the increase. This trend cannot continue if we all want the birth of Kogi State of our dream, which will not only compete with other States within the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but will become a reference point.

CONCLUSION

It is my joy that the exercise that we began since February 2016 has been concluded and the benefits are clear for all to see. We have been able to accomplish one of His Excellency covenant with the good People of Kogi State made upon his assumption of office which is ‘Civil Service and Pension Reform. The recommendations from the screening exercise which will revolutionalise our Civil Service include but not limited to the following;

- **Computerizing and centralizing the Payroll System of the State, Local Government workforce & Pensioners**
- **Abolition of Cash as Mode of Salary Payment**
- **Introduction of Pre Disbursement Audit for Salary Payment**
- **Limiting the duration of Tenure of Accountants in MDAs, Treasurers and Cashiers of LGAs to maximum of 2 years**
- **Biometric Data Capturing and Magnetic Stripe identify cards for All State and Local Government Personnel and Pensioners**
- **Priority to be given to Training and Capacity Building**
- **Overhauling The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)**
- **Overhauling of the Bureau of State and Local Government Pensions**

- **Right sizing the Numbers of Permanent Secretaries & Political Appointees. Maximum of 25 Permanent Secretaries and 113 Political Appointees**
- **Realignment of MDAs to appreciable number to eliminate duplication and ensure efficiencies and effectiveness.**
- **Empowering the Youth through existing National Schemes and Programmes**
- **Gazetting of Records e.g Appointment, promotion, termination, dismissals etc**
- **The need for fairness and equity in payment of gratuity to retirees**
The principle of payment of gratuity should be based on First In First Out (FIFO). That is payment of gratuity to those whose gratuity are long outstanding should be settled before payment of those who are just retiring.

Long Live His Excellency, The Executive Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello

Long live Kogi State,

Long Live The Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thank you.