



KOGI NGO NETWORK (KONGONET)

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1ST QUARTER 2022 PRESS–BRIEFING BY KOGI NGOs NETWORK (KONGONET) ON 4TH APRIL, 2022.

Gentlemen of the Press;

Welcome to our STATE OF KOGI quarterly Press briefing by KONGONET.

Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) is a coalition of Civil Society Networks championing the promotion of participatory democracy, good governance/best practices, transparent governance and network coordination in Kogi State through advocacy and policy influencing for the well-being of Kogites.

Highlight of events within the quarter

- The Kogi State government has formally appointed board members for the Kogi State Health Insurance Agency, though civil society representative as enshrined in the law is currently missing from the list of appointed members.
- Kogi State government finally yielded to the demand of Civil Society Group on HIV/AIDS in Kogi State by appointing board members for the Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA).
- Over ten (10) months, the Kogi State radio (FM 94.1) has been in comatose state despite several appeals to the state government to purchase the required transmitter for the only state owned radio in Kogi State Capital.
- It is noteworthy that in recent times, the Kogi State Greater Lokoja water project has significantly improved in water supply within some part of the state capital, though we call on the commissioner of water resource to reticulate to ensure more citizens get access to the water supply.
- The worrisome and persistent increase in the prices of food commodities across the state leaves lots of questions unanswered in regards to the capacity of relevant government MDAs to act and respond sufficiently to issues of pressing need of Kogites.
- There is still a lack of periodic interaction with the State Government with citizens to discuss matters of state importance. Civil Society looks forward for this to be addressed.
- The consistent push by Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) and several other organizations for Kogi State Government to Sign-On to Open Government Partnership (OGP) has finally yielded results. We await national secretariat of Open Government Partnership (OGP) for stakeholders' sensitization and the state formation of the required committee for the state OGP secretariat.

- The Kogi State Law on Disability Rights Office has finally been implemented, as the state government has appointed executive secretary and board members to oversee and implement the law.
- KONGONET observed with dismay a sharp rise in crimes and criminalities across the state within the reporting period. More worrisome is the audacity of the so called cultists operating in the state capital unabated.
- The sudden increase in Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) which necessitated the increase in transportation fares within the state has now normalised, yet tricycle riders within the state capital still peg their prices very high.

Health Issues:

Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN), reported significant improvement and restructuring of Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA) as the required substantive board for the agency has finally been appointed within the quarter. The said appointment has given the required credibility to the agency among other similar agencies across the nation. The leadership of Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN) within the reporting quarter appreciated His Excellency the Executive Governor of the state for appointing a member of the civil society community to serve as board chairman in Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA). CiSHAN reiterated within the reporting quarter that, Network of People Living With HIV/AIDs in Nigeria (NEPWHAN) and Initiative for Health and Social Development (IHSD) still remain the only CSOs presently implementing community level interventions in the State with support from Centre for Integrated Health Program (CIHP), they however, call on implementing partners and the state government to provide support to other CSOs within the state to boost the current community level interventions in the state.

Agricultural Intervention Issues:

The Analysis of the 2022 Agriculture Budget by the Budget Committee Group (BCG) with support from PIBCID/ActionAid Nigeria shows a decline in the allocated funds to the Agricultural sector. More worrisome is the observed consistent denial of funds to women in Agriculture, even though it is captured in the state budget every year. Small Scale Women Farmer Organization in Nigeria (SWOFON) Kogi State branch and members of the state civil society Budget Committee Group (BCG) held a press –briefing within the quarter to issue a statement over the 2022 Kogi State budget and decried the paltry sum allocated to the agricultural sector. SWOFON Kogi State opined that “In Kogi State year 2022 budget, Agriculture sector yet again got the least allocation compared to other major sectors that drives the social-economic development of the State such as Education and Health; Agriculture received the least at 4.90% compare to 22.68% for Education, 11.37% for Health”

SWOFON Kogi State and Budget Committee Group (BCG) concluded that if Agriculture is to serve as a means of diversifying the economy of Kogi State as promised in the new direction blueprint of the Government of the State, then allocations to the sector is grossly inadequate and fund releases to the sector are too poor.

Education Sector:

Within the reporting period, the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) lamented over the continuous reduction in the quality of basic education across the state once again. The coalition through her state coordinator said the state had neglected the welfare of primary school teachers as evidenced in the non-payment of full salaries to basic education teachers across local government areas of the state and non-maintenance of basic school infrastructures. The coalition called on the state and local government to immediately resolve the above challenges and save the future of Kogi State children.

Social Welfare Issues:

Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kogi State within the reporting quarter made a huge progress in civil resolution of domestic violence, women abuse and child custody cases across the state and as well conducted school sensitization activities across selected communities in the State.

The Association for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (AONN) urgently calls on the Hon. Commissioner of Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to partner with the coalition towards getting assent to the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Bill passed by the state house of assembly sometimes ago. The current emerging cases of child abuse and female trafficking issues in the State have to be nipped in the bud.

Security Issues:

As the apex Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Network in the state, our interest is to ensure that the wellbeing, lives and property of our citizens are protected at all times and we pursue this with vigour. The business of securing lives and property of citizens is the business of all, though legally coordinated by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). The security situation in Lokoja the state capital has nosedived in recent time, arising from petty theft of motorcycles to cult related activities which has claimed many lives, others injured and many house and livelihood destroyed in the following communities - Old Market, Kpatan Koto, Rimi, Madabo and Angwan Kura respectively. It appears the number and spread of the police force is insufficient to police the state sufficiently, places like Kaduna junction and Zango with high inflow of migrants rarely feels the presence of the police force and in the case of an emergency, it might take quite a while before help comes.

Recommendations:

- The Kogi State government should quickly cash into Youth Development Commission platform and empower youths across the state to curtail the high youth unemployment situation of the state.
- We recommend that the state government should swiftly put in place a committee to unravel the misery behind the astronomical increment on agricultural/consumer goods across the state and proffer immediate, mid-term and long-term solutions to them. Again, the need for a concise, participatory youth and women in agriculture policy to harness the numerical value of these groups in improving the state food security and alleviating the daunting poverty in our communities cannot be over emphasized.

- The State Government should stick to its commitment establishing communication medium with the Civil Society Networks in the state to ensure holistic development.
- We recommend that the state government should immediately appoint the required committee members and kick start the state Open Government Partnership (OGP) secretariat to create avenue for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and citizens of Kogi State interact and document developmental strides of the government based on her social contract with citizen.
- We call on the Tricycle Owners Association of Nigeria (TOAN) Leaders, Kogi State branch to prevail on her members to revert to the old transportation fares to ease transport and movement of goods within the state capital in the light of the current economic challenges.
- We recommend that the state government with immediate effect consider reactivating intra-city transport scheme that will operate between Zango Daji Community through to Felele to ease the current price hike on transportation fares within the state capital.
- The Kogi State Government should ensure the succinct implementation of the laws establishing agencies such as Kogi State Health Insurance Agency (KGSHIA) and Disability Rights Office and bring on board representatives of Civil Society Organizations as dictated by the laws.
- The activities of Vigilante, Hunters group and the Police force are not well coordinated; we recommend that the Nigeria Police Force provide them with the necessary guidance and training as they complement the security architecture in the state. These however are short term measures; an important long term recommendation to deal with insecurity is to begin the conversation on State and Local Policing.
- On the ravaging activities of cultists among teens, we commend the activities of the LOKOJA FIRST ADVOCACY GROUP headed by Mall. Umar Ali for their efforts at engaging the issue of cultism within Lokoja specifically. We recommend that vocational skills and activities should be re-introduced or encouraged amongst these teens to occupy their minds. The take over and conversion of football pitch in streets and schools to erect offices, houses and churches without alternatives for teens to direct their energy might have encouraged this.
- While congratulating the newly deployed Commissioner of Police to Kogi State, we call on the commissioner to take charge of things and ensure the recent upsurge of kidnapping, cultism and other criminalities across the state is dealt with decisively.

In conclusion:

Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) will consistently support laudable initiatives of government to ameliorate the suffering of Kogites and ensure the state upholds the tenets of democracy and fair play in her administration of our collective resources. On behalf of Kogi State Civil Society Groups, we appreciate the Kogi state government for appointing board members for Kogi State Health Insurance Agency (KGSHIA), Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA) and Kogi State Disability Rights Office. We hereby call on His Excellency to assent Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Bill.

God Bless Kogi State.

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Long live the people of Kogi State. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Thank you.