



KOGI NGO NETWORK (KONGONET)

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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, accountable governance and network coordination in Kogi State through advocacy and policy influencing for the well-being of Kogites.

Background

The year 2021 has come to an end, a year filled with several uncertainties and yet undoubtedly the state made few inroads towards success. The final quarter of the year was filled with remarkable events, one of the state owned institutions, Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH) Osara matriculated her first set of students. The later part of quarter saw the retirement and appointment of a new clerk of Kogi State house of assembly and the deployment of new commissioner of police to the state. Within the reporting quarter, security challenges was also at its peak as the mother to the current Chief of staff to the executive governor was kidnapped from her house, two weeks later no information of her where about. The Kogi State house of assembly passed the 2022 appropriation bill and it was signed into law by the Executive Governor on 29th December, 2022 amidst concerns from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on budget defence by Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) as against public hearing on the budget. The budget also harbour more resources for recurrent expenditure compared to capital expenditure, a major concern was the huge sum budgeted to be spent in government house, an office that doesn't generate revenue. The rate of suspension of elected chairmen without immediate mechanism to investigate and act accordingly to ensure they return back cleared or supplementary election is done to replace them is a major concern.

Health Issues:

Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN) marked world aids day in collaboration with Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA), Center for Integrated Health Project (CIHP) alongside other Implementing Partners (IPs) in the state. The epileptic funding of health programs in state still remain a challenge, the celebration of World Aids Day (WAD) was not properly funded by the state and the unusual increase in public health challenges such as TB with more cases of XDR in the state, the state ministry of health by extension the state government should as a matter of urgency come up with strategies to stem the ravaging TB across the state. Civil Society groups within the reporting quarter made frantic efforts, mobilized, sensitized community members and obtained thousands of sputum samples to be analysed by the state managed GeneXpert sites. It is rather unfortunate to

report here that most GeneXpert sites in the state are yet to do the needful under the pretence of lacking cartridges and A4 papers. We appreciate the recent appointment of Executive Secretary (ES) for the Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA), meanwhile the board of the agency is yet to be appointed and inaugurated for proper functioning.

Within the reporting quarter three (3) Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the state partnered with the state government to ensure proper sensitization and mobilization of citizens across the state to take up their COVID-19 vaccination. The organizations carried out series of advocacy visits and organized sensitization workshops for stakeholders across the state. We are indeed glad that finally we are making progress at de-sensitizing kogites of the initial myths that COVID-19 is not real.

Agricultural Intervention Issues:

As usual, less than 30% of budgetary allocation for ministry of Agriculture was expended in 2021, lots of activities planned for the year as provided in the agricultural budget 2021 suffered lack of implementation, the rains are gone, the 2021 budget cycle has ended. All this anomalies in the management of Kogi State Agricultural sector will continue to pose serious challenge for the State in terms of Food Security and well-being of the citizens.

The Kogi State Budget Committee Group (BCG) led by Mr. Matthias A. Okpanachi reviewed, analysed and x-rayed the Kogi State 2022 Approved budget on how the State Agricultural sector is being funded and positioned for growth; as such, creating employment for the teeming youth, meeting the domestic food requirements and generating foreign revenue through the export of quality processed agricultural commodities. The outcome of the analysis shows that the allocation to the agricultural sector is grossly inadequate and insensitive to curbing insecurity through agriculture. Less than 5% of ₦145.8Billion has been budgeted to feed over 4 million Kogites in 2022 with a very bad record of funds release to the sector over the years.

It will be recalled that the new direction blueprint of the current administration states that “based on prevailing economic realities, Agriculture is the key to unlocking the enormous economic potentials of Kogi State”. It also promised that the Government will boost the Agriculture sector and its value chain as a profitable State stimulated venture and encourage organized business enterprise to lead development of Agriculture in the State. The Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Adoza Bello whilst declaring a state of emergency in Agriculture to boost food production and diversify the State’s economy in January 2017 promised to make farmers in the State especially women farmers rich and that the government have strategizes and plans in place to revolutionise Agriculture by giving necessary support to farmers in form of loans, land, cooperatives and other relevant assistance. We put the question to his Excellency, how can we revolutionize the agricultural sector of Kogi state with less than 20% budgetary allocation releases out of 5.68% budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector in 2021 as at August 2021 and less than 5% budgetary allocation for year 2022. Are we better off, in terms of food production in the state after four (4) years of the promise? Do we have affordable agricultural produce in the state now?

Education Sector:

We congratulate the staff and management of Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), Osara Kogi State for her successful matriculation of the first set of students. We appreciate the Executive Governor for the foresight, congratulations.

Within the reporting period, the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) lamented the continuous reduction on the quality of basic education in the state, hinged on non- payment of full salaries to basic education teachers across local government areas of the state and non –maintenance of basic school infrastructures despite having in place elected chairmen across the state. The coalition looks forward to amicable ways to be adopted by relevant authorities to solve this puzzle which has the capability of crippling the state basic education sector which serves as the foundation for all forms of education.

Social Welfare Issues:

The reported increase in rape cases across the state calls for a serious concern bearing in mind that the Kogi State House of Assembly graciously passed the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) bill over three (3) months ago, yet the Executive Governor has not accented the bill. This serve as risk factor to the universal call for the protection of human rights, Kogi State cannot afford to be on wrong side of history in human rights protection.

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, while still pursuing others cases in court. They have also gone ahead to launch a mentorship program at Salem University to train law students on FIDA intervention concepts. Marking the 2021 16days activism against gender based violence, they produced child friendly version of the state Child Rights Law (CRL) and as well carried out road shows and campaigns against gender based violence.

Political Environment:

The activities of Coalition on Civic Education (CCE) in Kogi State have spur up the need for creating special trust fund to support women in politics across the state. This renewed agitation has always been aimed at ensuring that women are empowered to overcome the social and economic barriers in our neolithic political space of Kogi State. On Kogi and Okene local government chairmen currently on suspension, the outcome of the investigation should be made public so the right steps are taken either they return back to their position if no substantial wrong doing has been established against them or conduct supplementary election to fill the position, we cannot afford to go back to the idea of appointing local government administrator in the name of acting, not again. KONGONET specifically call on the good citizens of the state to join in the decision making arena and develop the state, we cannot afford to all stay aloof while those who never really had the developmental interest of the state find themselves administering the state. We call on you all to join developmental politics and sanitize the system.

Infrastructure:

There has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of roads in the State capital Lokoja. However, the level of work at the Ganaja flyover is becoming a cause of worry to Citizens, especially the health and economic challenges that the persistent on-going construction is causing. The Government has always insisted on December 31st 2021 as the completion and commissioning date, but from facts on ground, this date is no longer tenable and there is silence on the part of the government on this.

There is also the issue of Transparency in the execution of the road projects as there are no information boards on the costs, and companies implementing this construction. Also tendering of the public projects, which is a requirement of the Fiscal responsibility Law and the Public Procurement Law, is shrouded in mystery.

Recommendations:

- Need for the State Government to appoint and inaugurate board members for Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA), to improve coordination of the State HIV Response.
- That the state government ensure the budgetary allocation to the ministry of agriculture is released timely to prevent the state from sliding into major food crisis, and also special attention be given to women farmers across the state.
- Need for the State in the short run, to increase recruitment of Vigilantes in high crime rate areas to compliment the services of the Nigerian Security Agencies and improve the Security of lives and properties.
- Need for a concise and strategic approach to addressing Drug Abuse and Cultism among the youths.
- Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to partner with Ministry of Justice towards establishment and operationalization of Sex Offender Register in Kogi State.
- Need for a sustainable mechanism for improving Citizen Participation and engagement in the electoral processes to deepen Accountability and Transparency in Governance.
- Need for the Governor to Accent to the VAPP Bill which has been passed by the Kogi State House of Assembly or in the alternative state his reasons for not accenting.
- Increase allocation and release of funds to the Agriculture Budget by virement of resources from the Governor's Office (Allowances Incidental to Governor's Travel).
- Need for urgent completion and public declaration on the cost of the Ganaja Flyover project to build confidence of citizens in Government handling of public resources.

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. KONGONET shall continue to engage the state government on the adoption and implementation of Open Government Partnership (OGP).

God Bless Kogi State.

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