



KOGI NGOs NETWORK

{ KONGONET }

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2ND QUARTER 2023 PRESS-BRIEFING BY KOGI NGOs NETWORK (KONGONET) ON 13TH JULY, 2023.

Gentlemen of the Press;

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

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

Overview of events within the quarter

As usual, members of Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) came together to review and shed light on the pressing issues in Kogi State within the quarter, the coalition reflected on several sectors of the state which includes health, education, agriculture, water supply, social services, and security in Kogi State. This unified effort aims to raise awareness, prompt immediate action, and foster positive change within these critical areas. Over the past years, Kogi State has grappled with significant challenges in various sectors, resulting in inadequate service delivery and diminishing living standards for its residents. The healthcare system has suffered from a lack of resources, dilapidated infrastructure at the local government levels, and insufficient medical personnel.

Similarly, the education sector has experienced a decline in standards, with inadequate funding, poorly equipped schools especially basic education in the state, and a shortage of qualified teachers, the services of the recently recruited teachers have not been efficiently put into use. The consequences of these deficiencies are evident in the generation of students in Kogi State ill-prepared to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving world.

Agriculture, a vital sector for economic growth and food security, has also been neglected. Insufficient investment, limited access to modern farming techniques, and inadequate support for farmers have hindered the sector's potential. As a result, agricultural productivity has suffered, exacerbating food scarcity and hindering economic development. Worst of it all, is the ongoing liquidation of some fixed assets of the agricultural ministry across the three (3) senatorial districts of the state.

Water supply, a basic necessity for human survival and it remains a dire concern for the citizens of Kogi State. Inadequate infrastructure, poor maintenance, and mismanagement have left many communities without access to clean and safe water sources, resulting in increased health risks, particularly for vulnerable populations. The Kogi State capital is worst

hit of recent as Lokoja residents have been cut-off from water supply for over two months and counting.

Social services, including welfare programs, housing, and public transportation, have also been neglected. Insufficient allocation of resources, ineffective policies, and a lack of accountability have contributed to the deterioration of these critical services, leaving citizens without essential support systems and exacerbating socio-economic disparities in the light of the current subsidy removal by the federal government on PMS.

Lastly, the issue of security cannot be overlooked. The prevalence of crime as the state gubernatorial election draws nearer is a cause for concern, inadequate engagement of community members by law enforcement agents, and a lack of proactive measures to address security challenges have left communities vulnerable in some instances and hindered social cohesion and economic development (Ogane-Enigu community invaded and ravaged by suspected herdsmen).

Health Issues:

Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN), reported a robust engagement with National Agency for the Control of Aids (NACA) and Kogi State Agency for the Control of Aids (KOSACA) towards the compilation of the national HIV spending data across the state. The leadership of Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN) within the reporting quarter call on His Excellency the Executive Governor of the state to release funds for the implementation of KOSACA 2023 budget. 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.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right of every citizen. Unfortunately, the health sector in Kogi State, including Lokoja, is confronted with various challenges, such as inadequate healthcare facilities, shortage of medical personnel, non- funding of HIV and AIDS programme in the state and limited access to essential medicines. We urge the state government to prioritize the improvement of community healthcare infrastructure, the recruitment and training of healthcare professionals, funding of HIV programmes and the provision of necessary medical supplies. By doing so, we can ensure that the people of Kogi State have access to the healthcare services they need and deserve.

Agricultural Intervention Issues:

Some concerned Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) intervening on agricultural programmes in the state and other individuals/stakeholders have express their deep concern over the neglect and liquidation of assets within the Ministry of Agriculture across the three senatorial districts of our beloved state within the quarter. We hereby call upon the Kogi State government to prioritize the agricultural sector and refrain from any further liquidation of vital assets that are crucial to the development and prosperity of our state.

Agriculture is the backbone of our economy, providing employment opportunities, food security, and contributing to the overall growth and development of our state. However, we

have witnessed a disturbing trend of neglect and disinvestment in the agricultural sector, which has resulted in the deterioration of agricultural infrastructure, decline in agricultural productivity, and a negative impact on the livelihoods of our farmers.

Liquidating assets within the Ministry of Agriculture is not only short-sighted but also detrimental to the future of our state. These assets, including farmlands, equipment, research facilities, and extension services, are essential for the advancement of modern farming techniques, improved crop yields, and sustainable agricultural practices. By liquidating these assets, we are undermining the potential for agricultural development and jeopardizing the future of our farmers and communities.

We firmly believe that the Kogi State government must recognize the critical importance of the agricultural sector and take immediate action to reverse the damage that has been done. We call upon the government to:

1. **Invest in Agriculture:** Allocate adequate resources and funding towards agricultural development programs, infrastructure improvement, and the provision of necessary agricultural inputs and services. This investment will unlock the potential of our farmers, enhance productivity, and contribute to the economic growth of our state.
2. **Protect Ministry of Agriculture Assets:** Cease any further liquidation of assets within the Ministry of Agriculture. Instead, prioritize the maintenance, rehabilitation, and expansion of these assets to ensure their usability and effectiveness in supporting the agricultural sector.
3. **Promote Agricultural Research and Extension Services:** Reinforce the importance of agricultural research and extension services by allocating sufficient resources and creating an enabling environment for research institutions and extension workers. This will facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, best practices, and technological advancements to farmers across the state.
4. **Support Smallholder Farmers:** Implement targeted programs and initiatives to support smallholder farmers, including access to credit, training, modern farming technologies, and market linkages. By empowering smallholder farmers, we can enhance their productivity, improve their livelihoods, and contribute to poverty reduction in our state.

The time for action is now. We urge the Kogi State government to demonstrate its commitment to the agricultural sector by investing in its development and protecting the valuable assets within the Ministry of Agriculture. Let us work together to revitalize our agricultural sector, empower our farmers, and secure a prosperous future for the people of Kogi State.

Education Sector:

Within the reporting period, the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) calls on the state government to regularize the employment of the newly recruited teachers and pay their salaries. The non-payment of the newly recruited teachers had already dampening their spirit and reduced productivity, hence the non-effectiveness of the newly recruited teachers across the state. The coalition through her state coordinator however called on the state government to pay close attention to primary school education

system in the state, he 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. He said primary school in Kogi State faces significant challenges in terms of infrastructure, teacher shortages, and access to quality education. He called upon the government to prioritize investments in primary education, including the construction and renovation of schools, recruitment and training of qualified teachers, and the provision of necessary learning materials. He said, by investing in education, we are investing in the future of our children and the development of our state.

Social Welfare/Gender Issues:

Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kogi State within the reporting quarter continued with her follow up and addressing numerous cases of gender violence. The group also carried out sensitization visits to security agencies and schools within the quarter. FIDA in partnership with members of the Association for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (AONN) Kogi state branch intervened on several cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and rape of a minor within the reporting period.

Social Services;

Efficient and effective social services play a vital role in ensuring the well-being of the people in our state. We call upon the government to prioritize the provision of social services, including access to electricity in some communities of the state, transportation, and sanitation facilities. Adequate investment in these areas will enhance the standard of living for our people and contribute to the overall development of our state.

Sustainable Water Supply:

Access to clean and sustainable water supply is a basic necessity for every individual. We acknowledge the challenges faced by many communities in Kogi State, including Lokoja, in accessing safe drinking water. We urge the state government to prioritize investments in water infrastructure, such as dams, pipelines, and water treatment plants, to ensure that all citizens have access to clean and safe water sources. This will not only improve public health but also promote economic development and social well-being.

PMS Subsidy Removal and Palliative Measures:

The recent removal of the petroleum subsidy has brought about economic challenges for the people of Kogi State. We urge the state government to implement palliative measures to cushion the effects of this policy change on the citizens. It is crucial to prioritize the well-being of the people by providing support in the form of targeted subsidies, social welfare programs, and job creation initiatives to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices.

Peaceful Electoral Campaigns and Security:

As we approach the forthcoming gubernatorial campaign, election, and post-election period in Kogi State, we call upon all political parties and their supporters to conduct themselves peacefully and responsibly. The state government must ensure a conducive environment for free and fair elections, promoting peaceful coexistence among all stakeholders. We also call on the Nigeria Police Force to be at the top of their game in securing the lives and properties of Kogites during this period, ensuring a safe and secure electoral process.

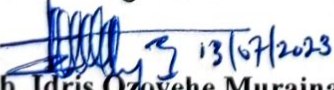
Recommendations:

1. Increased investment and reform in the healthcare sector, focusing on infrastructure development at the community level, recruitment and training of medical professionals, and provision of essential medical supplies.
2. Revitalization of the education system giving special attention to basic education through increased funding, infrastructure improvement, and recruitment of qualified primary school teachers.
3. Support for the agricultural sector through the provision of modern farming techniques, access to credit facilities, and the establishment of agricultural extension services. All plans to sell -off fixed assets of the agricultural ministry across the three (3) senatorial districts should be halted forthwith.
4. Improvement of water supply infrastructure and the implementation of effective management systems to ensure access to clean and safe water for all communities. Funds should be made available to fix the Greater Lokoja water project currently going moribund.
5. Strengthening social services through increased funding, efficient resource allocation, and the implementation of transparent and accountable policies. The Kogi State government should come clear on her strategies to mitigate the economic effects of fuel subsidy removal on PMS.
6. Enhancement of security measures, including redeployment of more police officers to the state and training of law enforcement personnel, implementation of community policing initiatives, and the establishment of proactive crime prevention strategies not reactionary, as it is being observed towards the upcoming election in the state. The Kogi State Police command should commence and sustain monthly stakeholder's engagement on election security.

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. It is the collective responsibility of the government, civil society organizations, and citizens to work together and address these pressing issues as already outlined. By doing so, we can foster a prosperous and equitable future for the people of Kogi State, ensuring improved health, education, agriculture.

God Bless Kogi State.


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