

# Ex-Nigerian Airways Workers: 2 Retirees Slump, Die On Queue As Absence Of Forms Stall Process

By **Olusegun Koiki** - October 19, 2018

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The ongoing verification and data capturing exercise of the ex-workers of defunct national carrier, Nigeria Airways at the Sky Catering Services at the Murtala Muhammed Airport (MMA), Lagos was stalled yesterday due to inadequate verification forms by officials of the Ministry of Finance, President Initiative on Continuous Audit (PICA) department. This is as investigation by our correspondent revealed that two retirees slumped and died while on queue at the venue of the exercise on Thursday.

The absence of the verification forms caused at the centre as hundreds of retirees could not be attended to by the officials.

No fewer than 3, 000 retirees were slated to be verified at the Lagos centre by the officials of PICA.

When our correspondent visited the centre yesterday, it was gathered that the verification forms had been exhausted as early as 10am while those slated for screening by the officials were stranded and had no clue on when the forms would be made available.

As at 1pm when our correspondent was leaving the centre, the forms were yet to be issued to the former workers. However, as at yesterday out of the 3,000 slated for the exercise, only 400 had been verified and gone through the data capturing.

On Monday, officials of PICA had said that at least 500 retirees would be verified and captured daily, but five days after the commencement of the exercise, about 400 had been processed.

At the centre, Capt. Julius Orimoloye, the first black pilot in on the content, decried the sordid arrangement.

Orimoloye, 87, explained that he was slated for Friday by the officials of PICA, but expressed disappointment with the handling of the exercise by the officials.

Orimoloye in an interview with our correspondent noted that the exercise was poorly handled by PICA officials in Lagos, stressing that the last exercise about 10 years ago was better handled than the current one.

He said: "It has been very terrible, worse than before. We were here last in 2008 and the exercise was much better than this, but have we made progress? The answer is no. There are lots that should have been done, but things are now worse.

"I came here from Akure, Ondo State Capital today (Friday), but all I see is chaos. I can't comment on a chaotic situation. I have not done anything. I was billed for Friday, which is today. The last exercise of 10 years ago, they billed me for Monday and I came down on a Monday, only to meet everybody else here.

"Those who were billed for Tuesday and Friday, were entering the place before me, but despite the confusion then, I was attended to within three hours. Now, I have been here since 9am, but nothing is happening."

Besides, Engr. Sheri Kyari, who worked in the Engineering Department before the airline was liquidated 2004, said that he was yet to go through verification.

According to him, he was penciled down for Tuesday, but as at yesterday, he was yet to be attended to by the officials of the ministry.

He also attributed the delay to poor power supply and network issues.

"The officials of PICA have not finished the one they started on Monday. As I am talking to you now, those they attended to on Monday have not finished capturing, which is very important. They claimed it was due to technology.

"However, I don't see them concluding the exercise in Lagos as envisaged because everyone will have to be attended to. My own date was shifted by 24 hours on Tuesday. Today again, I am here, but they are yet to attend to me."

Also, another beneficiary, Mr. Taiwo Adenekan blamed the delay in processing on officials of PICA.

Adenekan decried that the same exercise was smoothly performed by officials of Accountant General of the Federation in 2009 when late President Musa Yar'Adua approved five years of the 25 years pension for them.

"People should understand that these PICA officials are inexperienced when it comes to handling something like this.

This is their first time of handling issues like this. In fact, they lack the knowledge.

"Their system is slow and breakdown always, but I think they will learn on the job. Let's continue to cooperate with them."

Besides, it was gathered that two retirees of the former national carrier slumped and died on Thursday at the venue.

A source close to the venue told our correspondent that the remains of the dead were deposited at the mortuary.

The government through the Ministry of Finance had said recently that half of the N45bn, representing N22.5bn would be disbursed to the former workers soon while the balance of N22.5bn would also be disbursed to them at a later date.

Mr. John Waitono, Deputy Director, PICA, Ministry of Finance, who is coordinating the exercise in Lagos had exuded confidence on Monday that the exercise would be concluded as planned.

He did say that several stages would be required to be fulfilled before the beneficiaries would eventually be paid electronically.

"We have gone far with the exercise today. This is the first day and you can see what we have done already. We had challenges at the beginning of the exercise especially with capturing because the light was interrupted and the issue of the server, too, but, they have all been resolved.

"When you come first, you check your name on the list, you will now go for identification and then, clearing. After that, you are given a form to fill and they will check your documents if they appear as advertised in the papers. If this was in positive, you then go for capturing.

"We are expected to round up the programme by this Friday and after then, the sum would be sent to their accounts for payment. You know we are in a cashless environment. Those at the ministry would pay them after their clearance. Their bank details would be on the biometrics, passport would be captured. Then, we will generate payment voucher to the Accountant General of the Federation.

"For everyone that is cleared, the officials would sign. We have representatives of The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Auditor General and Ministry of Finance would sign the form for confirmation. Those are the ones that the sums would be sent to. Quality control of the IG of Police would check and do data cleaning. Any of the group that has been cleared would be paid," he had said.