

Former workers of the defunct Nigeria Airways on Wednesday said that about seven of their colleagues died in the last one week while awaiting their severance package from the Federal Government.

They spoke with journalists in Lagos through the Chairman, Elders Forum of the defunct Nigeria Airways, Mr. Godwin Jibodu, adding that the pensioners died in abject poverty despite having served the nation well.

He gave names of the deceased persons as Capt. Asuquo, Capt. Akintaju, Capt. Tunde Akinyosade, Capt. Sam Ohioma, and Mr. K. C. Amah while Mr. T. Bellgam and Mr. Ebenezer Akinbode were down with stroke.

According to him, one of the ex-workers, Capt. Charles Ntanyi, has been missing since August after boarding a commercial bus at night in the Ogba area of Lagos.

The Federal Government had earlier this year approved N45bn for the payment of gratuities and other retirement benefits of former employees of defunct airline, out of N78bn owed the workers.

The Minister of State for Aviation, Senator Hadi Sirika, who made the announcement after a Federal Executive Council meeting said that the ministry had started to put modalities in place for the payment, even as he regretted that some of the ex-workers had lost their lives in the process of waiting for the payment.

However, several weeks after the approval, the ex-workers were still waiting, Jibodu said.

He said, “We have lost seven colleagues within the last one week because they could not afford proper treatment for their ailments. This is very sad because the government has approved N45bn since June for the payment of our pensions and gratuities.

“We are appealing to Nigeria as a nation not to forget the contributions of the (defunct) Nigeria Airways to national development. Nigeria Airways till date has helped in building the capacity of workers in the aviation sector.”

Jibodu said since the money was approved, the pensioners had been making enquiries at the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Aviation and the Central Bank of Nigeria to know the reason for the delay in the disbursement of the money.