

Non-payment of salaries takes toll on Kogi workers as dozens die in agony

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wife who is also a primary school teacher is owed salary arrears of over 15 months.

On September 12, 2016, Simeon Senewo, collapsed and died at a patient medicine shop in Kabba, where he went to get some drugs. He had retired from the Ministry of Works, but was owed several months of his pension. Senewo, who suffered a terminal ailment that required regular medication, collapsed and died when the owner of the shop refused to give him drugs on credit.

Yusuf Anyimode, alias Equator, was diagnosed of an ailment which he had managed for eight years. A staff of Adavi Local Government Council, he was not paid salary for eight months when the staff verification exercise was on, and depended on friends and relations to survive. When the goodwill he enjoyed waned, he couldn't feed, not to talk of buying prescribed drugs.

Ironically, the day he received an alert from a bank in Okene, inviting him for documentation for a new bank account government opened for workers, he showed up at the bank but collapsed on the queue and was rushed to Obangede General Hospital. He eventually died.

His widow and children are yet to get a dime from Adavi LG. When the result of the screening was released, his family couldn't be paid the backlog of his salary arrears because he allegedly did not submit his original certificates.

Mrs. Iyabo Salihu, another staff in the health department of Adavi LG suffered a similar fate and died waiting for her nine-month salary arrears.

Mallam Ademoh Malik, a primary school teacher and son of a singer in Ihima, Okehi Local Government, died in November 2016, of complications associated with hypertension. He was owed seven months of salary arrears and couldn't afford his medication. His wife died three months after of typhoid, leaving his six children in the cold.



• Bello

The battle for survival has been tough for Alhaji Ibrahim Abubakar, a retired staff of Lokoja Local Government, resident in Lokoja. He suddenly developed high blood pressure due to non-payment of pension for 13 months despite the fact that he was screened and cleared:

"I retired five years ago and had been cleared by the screening committee but till today, I can't access my pensions. I have eight children, two at the Federal University, Lokoja, while two others are students of Kogi State Polytechnic; the rest are in secondary schools. I can longer feed and pay their school fees because of the situation I find myself."

In March 2017, some workers invited from the western senatorial district of the state to Lokoja for the screening exercise were



• Late Senewo

ambushed by gunmen and a woman who suffered hypertension died instantly, while others lost their documents. Two months later, some local council staff from the eastern senatorial district suffered a similar but tragic fate. Ten persons aboard an 18-seater bus died in a crash while returning after to their homes after their screening.

Moses Akande Joseph, a public affairs analyst is worried over the development. He said the state is sitting on a time bomb that could explode at any moment: "By the time the children of the workers whose parents were not paid salary and can no longer go to school take to the streets of Lokoja in protest, the government will find it difficult to curtail their actions because using force may result to more deaths." The solution, he said, was a quick fix by Governor Yahaya Bello.