



*Chat with*  
**HEAD OF SERVICE**

Mr. 'Dare Aragbaiye

11-15.MAY.2020



## RESPONSES

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## CHAT WITH THE HEAD OF SERVICE

The Ondo State Head of Service, Mr. 'Dare Aragbaiye, in keeping workers up-to-date on happenings and developments in the Public Service, especially during the COVID-19 period, directed that necessary machinery be put in place for regular online interactive sessions with Ondo State workers. The maiden session came up between Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 in which at least fifty (50) questions/comments/suggestions were received via the dedicated online/social media platforms (email: [info@dpsrd.on.gov.ng](mailto:info@dpsrd.on.gov.ng) and WhatsApp: +2348160622636).

The Head of Service expressed his profound appreciation to all workers and participants, in particular, for their questions, suggestions and encouraging comments. He prayed God to put an end to the ravaging pandemic affecting the whole world with the attendant adverse effects. He called on all workers to keep safe, observe all necessary measures and follow laid down rules/regulations, as introduced from time to time by

different tiers of Government. He also advised workers to seize the opportunity of the period to develop themselves and continue to contribute their quota for the development of Ondo State.

Below are the responses to questions/comments/suggestions. It has been done in such a way to avoid repetitions while trying not to leave out any.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) Discrepancy between graduates of Animal Production/ Animal Science/ Animal Husbandry in the LG Service and State Civil Service, with regards to LG staff becoming Livestock Officers like their counterparts in the State Civil Service.
- ii) Despite embargo on transfer of service from parastatals to mainstream of the civil service, centrally deployed officers are brought into the parastatals to head some cadres, like Accountant and Administrative Officers' Cadres.
- iii) Glory to God for the type of leader (HOS) we have at this time. Sir, we that studied Animal related courses in Agriculture & Natural Resources Department of the LG service have been clamouring for change of nomenclature for years now (from Agric officer to Livestock officer) as it is written in the scheme of service and observed in almost all the States of the Federation except Ondo State LGs. Please we need the intervention of this highly exalted office.
- iv) With all humility, I will be most grateful to know precisely when the qualified people for the 2020 promotion will be called for interview exercise and as well when our leave bonuses will be paid?

Answers: There is no discrepancy between the State Civil Service and the Local Government Service. Both are the same but each with its own scheme of service that guides it. Since the two services have separate schemes of service, they have to operate within the limit of their respective provisions. The approved scheme of service for LG Employees, 2006, has no provision for Livestock Officers. The Law establishing Local Government Service also stipulates the number of departments in the Service. To change it requires amendment to the Law.

- On movement of centrally deployed officers from mainstream to parastatals, the embargo on transfer of service into the mainstream is without prejudice to the powers of the Head of Service to any category of officers across the Public Service of Ondo State, whenever there is need for such. Moreover, we have had instances where officers are deployed from parastatals to the mainstream based on need, all within the prerogative of Government.
- Let me first point out that Year 2020 Promotion exercise commenced earlier than it had ever in many years, but had to be halted due to Covid-19 pandemic. The worker-friendly Government of Ondo State has, however, approved the continuation of the promotion exercise with necessary guidelines for safety. Please refer to Establishments Circular Ref. No. C.40 Vol. VIII/31 dated 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 for details of the guidelines.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) Kindly put smiles on the faces of staffs who are not on established posts at BATVE Programmes as they don't get their honoraria paid for months after Mr Governor's approval. Specifically, those harshly affected are:
  - (a) Facilitators of Continuing Education
  - (b) Facilitators of Mass Education
  - (c) Facilitators of Vocational Training Centres. With this lockdown, many of them cannot afford daily bread.
- ii) On the effect of the current lockdown situation on an average civil servant, though salaries are paid as and when due, (we thank our benevolent Governor for that), is there no plan for food or other palliatives for the average civil servant, to ease their sufferings while at home?
- iii) Good day sir. Why is there difference in salary for the same qualifications and the same year of service? There should be harmonization.

- iv) I appreciate God for your life. Please help give the final approval to Scheme of Service in the LG service so that it can be implemented to the letter. There is need for emphasis on the rules of conversion, such that one cannot eat his cake and at the same time, have it.

- Answers: The situation at the Board of Adult, Technical and Vocational Education (BATVE) has been looked into. The warrant for their payment is before the Accountant-General. It will soon be resolved.
- I join all workers to thank Mr. Governor for the efforts on prompt payment of salaries despite the present harsh economic realities. Public Servants coming to work have been provided with facemasks. MDAs also have been provided sanitizers and other items for hand washing. However, Public Servants are, for now, exempted from Covid-19 palliatives distribution. The palliatives are targeted at the vulnerable and the weakest or poorest of the poor. Your plea for extension of the palliatives to civil servants is noted and will be considered in due course.
    - On the purported salary discrepancy for same qualification, please note that different the services (Civil, Judicial, Teaching Services etc) have salary structures peculiar to them. Workers in the same service have uniform salary structure. In some cases, employees possessing degree but desperately opting for junior posts, would earn salary far below their graduate counterparts in senior posts. The fault is, therefore not that of the employer but that of the employee. However, the regulation gives room for anyone who notices any discrepancy in his/her salary to write and complain through the appropriate channels.
  - I have been informed that the process for full implementation of the approved scheme of service for LG employees has commenced and would be concluded soon. On the rules of conversion, there are circulars guiding it within the Public Service. The provisions are quite lucid and are being applied by Accounting Officers of respective MDAs as well as the LG service.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) You are indeed the most worker-friendly HOS I have ever known in Ondo State. We are glad at the LG service for deeming it necessary to visit us few months ago (March).  
Please sir, at the LG with high population of workers, we are having only three Permanent Secretaries in the entire service. We want you to use your good office to increase the opportunity to six or seven.
- ii) For many years now, no single Environmental Health Worker has been recruited.  
Pls. sir, kindly use your good office to see to their recruitment across the 18 LGs, especially at this Covid-19 period that they are seriously needed. Thanks and GOD bless you.

- Answers: Appointment of Permanent Secretaries is the exclusive preserve of Mr. Governor. However, I will convey your prayers for consideration. I also assure you that I will not hesitate to lend my support whenever I find it necessary.
- Indeed, Government is concerned with the current dearth of Environmental Health Workers at the State level. Government realizes that their services are highly needed, for a safer and healthier environment. This is being looked at along with other identified areas of need.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) Sir, why are primary school teachers being paid a percentage (%) of their salaries since Feb. 2020 and April not yet paid?
- ii) Sir, what is the latest about our 30% March salary and April salary? It is really affecting primary school teachers.
- iii) Sir, I appreciate your efforts since you assumed the post of HoS. The State Government owes LG and Primary School retirees pension and gratuity, whereas State Government retirees were paid fully. Kindly use your good office to assist the elderly primary school retired workers. I know you have been assisting us, God will continue to guide you.

Answers: The monthly allocations accruing to the States and LGs from the Federation Account have reduced in recent times. This has affected the finances of States and LGs, and is largely responsible for the current percentage payment of salaries of Primary School Teachers and LG workers.

- There was a bit of delay in paying April, 2020 salary to Primary School Teachers. This was as a result of the staff verification exercise carried out by the State Government, which discovered fraudulent practices perpetrated by some dubious workers. The latest as at end of April is that the balance for March and the April salaries have been paid. The practice is that the shortfall of a preceding month is first considered for payment in the current month, before whatever is to be paid in the current month is considered.
- This arrangement settles outstanding percentages of salaries and pensions of previous month(s). The prevailing situation is well understood by labour leaders and other stakeholders who converge monthly at JAAC meetings to allocate the available funds. I personally feel the pains of our retirees, particularly those in the primary school category and will leave no stone unturned in protecting their interests because they deserve the best of our efforts.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) My greetings to HOS and his Team. I'm one of the senior citizens. I retired about five years ago. I want to know why our gratuity is not being paid. I suggest that the ODSG should use part of ₦4.3 billion recently discovered to pay the gratuity and one month outstanding salary. This will be to the advantage of Government.
- ii) I worked with the Ondo State Govt and retired in 2014. Since then I have not been paid my gratuity. My intention was that, if my entitlement is paid, I will go back home and embark on a small scale farming to sustain myself and family. My monthly Pension is not enough to take care of my domestic and children commitments.

Answers: Thank you all for the relevant questions, though it is not true to insinuate that gratuity is not being paid. It is on record that the present administration has released over ₦5.4 billion for payment of gratuity alone to State Pensioners since Feb. 2017. This administration also makes a monthly release of the sum of ₦150 million for payment of gratuity.

- However, the reduction in Federal allocations has not made fund release to be as regular as it used to be. This affected regular payment of gratuity, but the Akeredolu-led Administration has been keeping faith with the regular payment of salaries and pensions, despite the dwindling resources.
- Please note that all those who retired up to year 2012 have been paid, while efforts are being made to complete those of year 2013 to be followed by 2014 and so on. It is my prayer that Almighty God will preserve all the beneficiaries to reap the fruits of their labour.
- On the suggestion for utilization of the discovered ₦4.3 billion for gratuity payment, The fund was discovered in year 2018 and had since been expended on certain critical commitments of Government including gratuity payment as approved.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) I am a Consultant Pediatrician and I worked with the Hospitals' Management Board (HMB) from July to October, 2019. I am yet to receive any salary and I am told my file is yet to be signed, which is why I have not been paid. Kindly use your good office to help me sir.
- ii) I am a Chief Matron/ Clinical Instructor at School of Midwifery, now a Department at University of Medical Sciences, Akure campus. I applied for conversion from the post of Chief Matron/Clinical Instructor, GL 14 to the post of Assistant Director, GL 14 since 2017.

I wish to inform the HOS that I have been deprived of the opportunity of lateral conversion after several attempts since 2017. I was told at the Civil Service Commission that they are awaiting the list of officers who wrote conversion exam last year to be forwarded to them. This decision has really given me a kind of set back, in that my colleagues who have been given their letters of conversion will be moving to GL 15, by the promotion exercise slated for this year, while I am still battling with conversion issue.

iii) Sir, Mr. Gov. made a pronouncement that health workers hazard allowance should be increased to 50% of their consolidated basic salary with immediate effect. When would this be effected sir? Sir, what will happen to this year's promotion, due to Covid-19 pandemic?

iv) Please, when are we receiving our remaining salary arrears?

Some of us at HMB who got Promoted since 2016 have not received our arrears of the promotion as stated in the Promotion letter.

v) I want to use this opportunity to commend the effort of the Government in the fight against COVID-19. I have two suggestions. (i) Legal action against violators of Curfew, including accident victims brought in during curfew; (ii) Payment of salaries to frontline workers owed. Thank you, sir for giving the state workers/citizens this opportunity to interact with you.

vi) Mine is on curbing the spread of this Covid-19, with special focus on "Hotels and Guest houses". Those who sneak into the Country, inter States and major towns make use of them. I advise that those without testing kits should not be allowed to operate.

vii) Sir, I am a Chief Nursing Officer employed by the HMB in March 2000. In the year 2018, I signified my intention to work with the newly established Unimed Teaching Hospital, hence was retained along with others in Ondo city.

Till date, no letter of absorption was issued to me by Unimedth indicating the transfer of my service from HMB to Unimedth. My last promotion in 2019 was by HMB. Up till now, no written document binds me to Unimedth.

Can I regard myself as a bonafide Unimedth staff or as a HMB staff working at Unimedth?

Answers: Again, I appreciate all the questions and comments.

- The issue of salary of the Consultant Pediatrician, who claim to have worked briefly for four months with HMB before joining FMC, Owo, has been looked into. The purported appointment was discovered to be illegal as it had no approval of the Governor.
- For the Chief Matron/Clinical Instructor with the School of Midwifery, the conversion exercise has been concluded and the list of recommended officers forwarded to HMB for further action. If there is any case of supersession after the conversion, there is still opportunity for redress.
- Further to the pronouncement of Mr. Governor, appropriate circular letter had been issued for payment of the Covid-19 Special Hazard and Risk Allowance approved for State Health workers. It is to commence with effect from May 2020 salary.
- With regard to arrears of 2016 promotion benefits, it was the decision of Government then not to pay arrears due to paucity of fund. It was not peculiar to HMB.
- All other Covid-19 related suggestions are well noted with and will be relayed to the Covid-19 Committee.
- Also, for the Chief Nursing Officer and all others that transferred their service from HMB or other services to the University of Medical Science Teaching Hospital (UnimedTH), you should all regard yourselves as bonafide staff of UnimedTH. I assure you all that the Teaching Hospital will be made to do the appropriate documentation and your respective service transfers regularized.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

- i) Sir, I want to suggest that a solid structure should be put in place to ensure the continuity of technology-based initiatives in the public service after your tenure as Head of Service of Ondo State.
- ii) Thanking Mr. Governor and your good-self for regular payment of salaries and arrears owed by past administration. However, during this pandemic sir, we appeal for palliatives to civil servants and payment of leave bonus and deduction remittances (Feb. – Apr.).
- iii) ODSIP is one of the best Reforms in the Public Service. The proposed ODSIP Newsletter is very good. Now, with more time for research thinking during this lockdown, kindly consider regular release and circulation of the Newsletter to spur more contributions and generation of innovative ideas from the workforce.
- iv) I want to know whether there are plans by the government to make workers in the state to be ICT compliant. I feel this will make us to be more productive.
- v) For sometimes now, we have not had renovation of Government Quarters for some years. What is the effort of the present administration as regard general renovation of government quarters including their interior?
- vi) May I ask what preparation the State Government is making towards food security?  
Two things are on my mind:
  - i. Renovating the silo at Oda road for food storage against any eventuality.
  - ii. Putting in place 'food locker plant' that would be managed like a post office (due to electricity failure at various homes). During this kind of lockdown, our peoples mind would be at rest when they are sure of a food reserve somewhere.
- vii) The HoS sir, During the maiden edition of our HoS address to Change Ambassadors at SITA, he did mention that Ondo State will soon organize a revenue summit as part of measures to tackle the Revenue Gap identified in ODSIP, as we cannot continue to rely on Abuja allocations. Now, with the Covid-19 Pandemic and drastic fall in the price of oil and attendant sharp reduction in the statutory allocation to States, what can we do to ensure that Government continues to discharge its social responsibilities to the good people of Ondo State and pay salaries and pensions as well?

Answers:

- The various suggestions on continuity of technology-based initiatives in the Public Service, commencement cum regular publication of ODSIP Newsletter, need to adequately prepare for agricultural/ food security in Ondo State and increasing the State IGR are noted and appreciated. They are all being looked into for the benefit of our Public Service and State.
- Workers would recall that the present administration inherited seven (7) and eight (8) months' salary arrears in the State and LG services respectively, out of which only one (1) and two (2) months respectively are outstanding. Government acknowledges workers' appreciation for this gesture and will try its possible best to ensure regular payment of monthly salaries and entitlements including those of retirees, notwithstanding the sharp drop in revenue from the Federation Account. I am sure that Ondo State Government would attend to the remaining one month salary arrears, leave bonus and outstanding deductions as soon as the State finances improve. At this year's May Day symbolic celebration, Mr. Governor again reiterated his promise to pay before the end of his first tenure.
- On plans to make workers ICT compliant, this is the way to go and Ondo State cannot afford to be left behind. ICT deployment in the Public Service can be attested to in its application in the areas of budgeting, boost in IGR, workers' Bio-data card, to mention but a few. Very soon, we will be having the deployment of a Home-grown Human Resource Management (HRM) system, which is intended to improve service delivery, reduce corruption and manage cost of governance. All hands must be on deck in line with ODSIP motto **"To Give My Best"**.
- Extensive renovation of government staff quarters require huge fund amidst other vital needs, all competing within the limited scarce resources. The present administration being worker-friendly has

been renovating but gradually. For instance, painting of exterior walls of some quarters was done last year. The ones to be done this year have been selected and work will start as soon as fund is available. The suggestion for extensive renovation, covering interior/exterior of the quarters is noted please.

Conclusion: I want to appreciate you all for being well behaved and for putting in your best at your respective duty posts. On my part and on behalf of Government, we will continue to be guided by relevant extant rules and regulations and uphold general principles of equity and fairness to all, in all our dealings.

I thank you all and look forward to another interactive online session soon.