



Civil SERVICE NEWS

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SPECIAL EDITION

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Nigeria, UK Collaborate to Advance Civil Service Reforms *Page 11*



His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, congratulates Mrs. Esther Didi Walson-Jack, OON, mni after her swearing in as the new HCSF at the Presidential Villa in Abuja on Monday 12th August, 2024.

Marching to Greatness: Celebrating HCSF's 100 days in Office

By **Ebere Ndukwu**
Abuja

As Nigeria's Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack marks her first 100 days in office, a wave of optimism and anticipation has swept through the nation's public sector. With over three decades of experience in civil service, Walson-Jack has brought to the table a wealth of knowledge, a

deep sense of duty, and an unwavering commitment to reform. In her short time at the helm, she has already started to implement critical changes that promise to transform the civil service, positioning it as a more efficient, transparent, and people-centered institution.

A leader rooted in service

Didi Esther Walson-Jack's journey in public service is a testament to her unwavering

dedication to the nation. She started her career in 1994 and has steadily climbed the ranks, earning a reputation for integrity, innovation, and reform-minded leadership. Prior to her appointment as Head of Service, she held key positions, including the role of Federal Permanent Secretary in various ministries, and most recently, the Federal Ministry of Education. These roles helped hone her leadership skills and solidify her

understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by Nigeria's civil service.

Walson-Jack's appointment as the Head of Service on July 17, 2024, was met with wide approval, both within and outside the public sector. Her vast experience, combined with her proven track record in governance and administrative reforms, made her the ideal candidate to lead the civil

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Walson-Jack Celebrates Teachers, Reaffirms Commitment to Reforms in Civil Service



The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack,

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CIVIL SERVICE NEWS 24001



Congratulations



100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack OON, mni
HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF THE FEDERATION



The Government and people of Bayelsa State and, indeed, the Ijaw nation felicitate with you on your first 100 days in office. We are excited about your remarkable achievements in driving the nation's Civil Service to an enviable height. Congratulations!



Senator Douye Diri
Executive Governor of Bayelsa State



His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, swears in the newly appointed HSCSF, Mrs. Esther Didi Walson-Jack, at the Presidential Villa in Abuja on Monday 12th August, 2024.



Outgoing HCSF Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan, CFR, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and Mrs. Esther Didi Walson-Jack, OON, mni, at the ceremony where Mrs. Walson-Jack was sworn in as the new Head of the Civil Service of the Federation on August 12, 2024.

Walson-Jack's Journey Begins: Sworn-In as Head of Civil Service

Stories By: **Wole Ajeturmobi**

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Monday, August 12, officially swore in Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack as the new Head of

Civil Service of the Federation, marking a significant transition in Nigeria's civil service leadership.

The swearing-in ceremony took place at the Council Chamber of the Aso Rock Presidential Villa, Abuja, just before the

commencement of the Federal Executive Council meeting at around 1:00 p.m.

Mrs. Walson-Jack succeeds Dr. Folashade Yemi-Esan, who served as

the substantive Head of Service since March 4, 2020. Dr. Yemi-Esan bowed out after attaining the mandatory retirement age

of 60 on August 11, 2024.

President Tinubu, while administering the oath of office, acknowledged the enormity of the responsibilities Mrs. Walson-Jack is set to undertake, noting her predecessor's high standards.

"You're stepping into very big shoes, and we pray that God continues to guide you, provide you with wisdom, and enhance your integrity to serve this country and the civil service in the most successful way," he said.

The President expressed profound gratitude to the outgoing Head of Service for her exemplary leadership and dedication during her tenure.

He remarked, "Dr. Folashade Yemi-Esan must be thanked for her exceptional tenure as Head of Service. We thank her for her commitment, duty, and loyalty."

"As she steps down, we express our deep gratitude for her unwavering commitment to the service of her country. As we bid farewell to her, we are also here to officially swear in the new Head of Service," he added.

Mrs. Walson-Jack's appointment was initially announced by the Presidency on July 17, 2024, nearly a month before her swearing-in. Her new role places her at the helm of efforts to reform and modernize Nigeria's civil service, a critical organ in the nation's governance

Walson-Jack Takes the Helm: Pledges to Accelerate Civil Service Reforms

Following the appointment and the swearing-in of the new Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack by President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu, at the Federal Executive Council meeting on Monday, August 12, the outgoing HCSF, Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan, CFR, officially handed over the baton of

leadership to her.

The handing over ceremony took place at the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), Tuesday, 13th August, 2024 being the

retirement date for Dr. Yemi-Esan, CFR.

In her Acceptance Speech, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack thanked God Almighty for taking her to the pinnacle of her career. She also appreciated Mr. President for the trust and confidence reposed in her to serve the nation, promising to honour the achievements of her predecessors by continuing and fast-tracking ongoing reform initiatives in the Service.

While reiterating the maximum use of technology in driving transformation in the Service, the new Head of Service promised to maintain, enforce, and deploy the core principles of the Service namely; Accountability, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Loyalty, and Efficiency (AMPLE) in all her dealings.

She, however, beckoned on all stakeholders and Civil Servants to support the Vision and Mission of the Service toward the realisation of the Renewed Hope Agenda of the present Administration.

Earlier, the retiring HCSF, Dr. Yemi-Esan, CFR, prayed God to sustain her successor and give her the necessary strength and wisdom to excel, in the overall interest of the Service and Nigeria, in general.

Mrs. Walson-Jack holds a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Lagos and was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1987.

She started her Civil Service career as a State Counsel in Rivers State in 1992, rising to the position of Solicitor-General and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice in Bayelsa State.

The HCSF joined the Federal Civil Service in 2009 and was appointed as Permanent Secretary in 2017. She served in several MDAs, including the OHCSF, Niger Delta Affairs, Power, Water Resources and Sanitation and, lately, Education.

During her tour of duty at the OHCSF, as the Permanent Secretary, Service Welfare Office (SWO), she is credited with initiatives such as the creation of the Federal Integrated Staff Housing (FISH) programme and immersed contributions to labour relations and the national minimum wage.

The HCSF is a recipient of the National Honour of the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) and an alumna of the prestigious National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru. Her wealth of experience and dedication to the Service and country, at large, are testimonies to her numerous roles and achievements.

She is the author of the novel, 'Roses in the Thorns' and is happily married with children.



Ex-HCSF Folasade Yemi-Esan, officially hands over the baton to the new HCSF Esther Didi Walson-Jack.

National Council on Establishments: A Pillar for Nigeria's Socio-Economic Growth – Walson-Jack

Rebirth of a Vision: Head of Service Reintroduces Civil Service Anthem to Inspire Excellence



Representative of the Executive Governor of Osun State, the Deputy Governor of Osun State, Prince Kola Adewusi, (7th R), Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni (8th R), Heads of Service of the 36 states and the FCT at the 46th National Council on Establishments in Ede, Osun State

Stories By: **Wole Ajetunmbi**

Ongoing reforms in Nigeria's civil service are geared towards transforming the efficiency and service delivery of civil servants to meet the rising expectations of Nigerians. According to the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, these reforms, which are aligned with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's "Renewed Hope Agenda," are critical for building a more effective, transparent, and responsive civil service that will support national development.

Walson-Jack made this statement during her recent keynote address at the official opening ceremony of the National Council on Establishments (NCE) meeting held in Ede, Osun State. As Chair of the NCE, Walson-Jack emphasized the body's critical role in shaping civil service administration in Nigeria.

"The National Council on Establishments is indispensable for the effective implementation of government policies," she said, underlining its importance as the apex policy-making body for civil service matters.

In a statement by Eno Olotu, Director of Information and Public Relations, the HCSF reiterated her commitment to driving the success of Tinubu's administration through the civil service. She stressed that the capacity of the civil service to plan, implement, and monitor government initiatives would determine the success of national goals.

"Our civil service must continuously evolve to meet the challenges of modern governance. This is crucial for effective delivery of government programs and services to the people," Walson-Jack added.

The Head of the Civil Service expressed gratitude to

the Governor of Osun State, Senator Ademola Jackson Adeleke, for hosting the meeting and for the warm reception given to the delegates. She noted that the reforms being pursued by her office are focused on enhancing collaboration with state Heads of Service to build capacity and achieve shared objectives.

"We are resolute in providing support to State Heads of Service through enhanced collaboration and capability building. The unity and commitment of all stakeholders are critical to the success of our ongoing reforms," she stated.

A call for unity in public sector reform

During her address, Walson-Jack called for unity among public sector stakeholders to drive reforms that will align the civil service with the expectations of the Nigerian populace.

"As my maiden edition of the NCE meeting, I want to reaffirm that the unity and commitment of all public sector stakeholders are essential. Our dedication and efforts will ensure that the civil service meets the current expectations of Nigerians and evolves to serve the public more effectively," she said.

She further highlighted the significant role that civil servants play in the achievement of President Tinubu's "Renewed Hope Agenda."

"The civil service is pivotal to the success of President Bola Tinubu's agenda. The effectiveness of the civil service will directly influence how well we can implement and monitor the administration's programs and initiatives," Walson-Jack explained.

Osun governor highlights public service's role

The Governor of Osun State, Senator Ademola Jackson Adeleke, represented by his Deputy, Prince Kola Adewusi, welcomed Walson-Jack and the NCE members to Osun, the "State of the Living Spring." In his remarks, Governor Adeleke emphasized the importance of the public service in driving his administration's progress and improving governance. He noted that the welfare of workers and pensioners remains a top priority in his 5-Point Action Plan, which is focused on enhancing good governance and public administration in Osun State.

"The public service is the driving force behind my administration's progress. The welfare of workers and pensioners is a key priority, and I hope this meeting will lead to policies that will advance both Osun State and the nation as a whole," said Adeleke.

He called for meaningful and constructive deliberations during the NCE

meeting, urging the council to consider policies that will propel the nation forward.

"I look forward to deliberations that will lead to solutions for advancing our nation, especially through the civil service," the Governor added.

Senate committee commends civil service

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Establishments and Public Service Matters, Senator Oluwale Cyril Fasuyi, delivered a goodwill message commending the Nigeria Civil Service for its role in ensuring the smooth operation of government functions.

"The Nigerian civil service is the engine room of government operations, and its role in contributing to national unity, growth, and development cannot be overemphasized," Fasuyi remarked.

He stressed that reforms aimed at improving efficiency,

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A New Era of Excellence: HCSF Walson-Jack Inspires Civil Servants to Embrace Efficiency, Integrity

At an engaging Meet and Greet Cocktail for journalists in Abuja on Monday, October 7, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Didi Esther Walson-Jack, passionately outlined her vision for the Nigerian civil service. Her message was clear: she hopes to see every civil servant embody efficiency, productivity, integrity, and a deep commitment to citizens.

In her remarks, Walson-Jack expressed heartfelt gratitude to the media for its unwavering support throughout her tenure.

"I know this office has always enjoyed tremendous support from the media, and I can personally attest to it," she

said, recalling her previous years in the office. She extended thanks for the continued coverage of her administration's activities, particularly following her appointment as Head of Civil Service.

Reflecting on the strides made, Walson-Jack emphasized the importance of the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021–2025, a blueprint guiding current reforms. However, she also stressed that her administration is introducing fresh creativity and innovation to accelerate progress.

With six key pillars driving these reforms, she urged the

In a bold and transformative move, the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Didi Esther Walson-Jack, recently reintroduced the Federal Civil Service Anthem—a powerful symbol designed to reignite the spirit of patriotism, integrity, and commitment among Nigeria's public servants.

First unveiled in 2018, the anthem has been revitalized as a central pillar of the ongoing civil service reforms, aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency, and a deep focus on citizen-centered service delivery.

During a recent meeting with media executives in Abuja, Walson-Jack passionately underscored the anthem's renewed purpose. "This anthem is more than just words," she said, "it is a call to action—an affirmation of what it means to serve the nation with integrity, to be efficient, productive, incorruptible, and citizen-centered."

According to her, these values encapsulated in the anthem will not only guide public servants but also inspire a new era of excellence within the civil service.

This reintroduction comes at a critical juncture for the federal civil service, as the office continues to steer the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021–2025, a blueprint designed to transform the service into a more agile, innovative, and effective institution.

Walson-Jack emphasized that creativity and innovation are key to accelerating this reform agenda, which is built on six pillars of improvement. The anthem, she believes, will serve as a motivational force, driving the momentum needed to ensure that these reforms are fully realized.

The Head of Service did not fail to acknowledge the unwavering support of President Bola Tinubu, whose

"Renewed Hope Agenda" has been a guiding light in the reform journey.

"The federal civil service must deliver on the Renewed Hope Agenda," Walson-Jack stressed. "It's not just about reform for reform's sake; it's about ensuring that the civil service is equipped to meet the evolving needs of the Nigerian people."

As she looked forward to her administration's 100 days in office, Walson-Jack highlighted a range of initiatives in the pipeline that would further position the civil service as a key driver of national progress. Among them, the civil service anthem stands out as a cultural tool to unite public servants under a common vision, reminding them of their role as stewards of public trust.

The lyrics of the anthem are simple yet profound, resonating deeply with the ideals that define the civil service's mission: to serve with integrity, uphold accountability, and put the needs of citizens first. Walson-Jack envisions a future where every civil servant—whether at the federal or local level—internalizes these values and lives them out in daily service to the nation.

As Nigeria embarks on this next chapter of civil service reform, the reintroduction of the anthem marks more than just a symbolic gesture; it is a declaration of intent, a commitment to building a more efficient, professional, and forward-thinking public administration. The anthem will not only echo through the halls of government offices but also serve as a reminder to all Nigerians that public service is a noble calling—one that requires dedication, discipline, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

With this renewed spirit, the civil service is poised to not only meet but exceed the expectations of the Nigerian people, delivering on the promise of good governance and national development.

media to provide extensive coverage, ensuring that the public remains informed and engaged with the ongoing transformation.

In a bold new initiative, Walson-Jack unveiled a project that is sure to uplift civil servants nationwide: the reintroduction of the *Federal Civil Service Anthem*.

"The anthem will be sung by all civil and public servants, and indeed Nigerians," she shared, noting that its lyrics are designed to inspire a renewed sense of purpose in public service. "The anthem will remind us all to be efficient, productive, incorruptible, and citizen-

centered."

As her administration approaches its first 100 days, Walson-Jack hinted at more exciting developments, promising that in time, the media would be invited to witness and report on these accomplishments.

In the meantime, she left the room with a sense of anticipation and pride, inviting journalists to not only observe but also join in singing the anthem of a new, reformed civil service.

This marks a new era for Nigeria's civil service—one where integrity and dedication to the public good stand at the forefront of national progress.



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Editorial

Reviving Civil Service Morale: Leadership with Purpose

Avibrant, efficient, and motivated civil service is the backbone of any thriving government. Yet, for many years, Nigeria's civil service has struggled with low morale, inefficiency, and a culture of complacency. In an era where public sector productivity is vital for national growth, it is refreshing to witness the steps taken by the new Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HoS), Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, to inject renewed vigor into the nation's civil service. Her leadership has been marked by a clear commitment to reviving morale, restoring pride, and enhancing productivity within the service through strategic, purpose-driven initiatives.

Leadership that listens

From her first day in office, Walson-Jack made it clear that her approach to leadership would be inclusive and consultative. One of her earliest and most symbolic moves was the introduction of town hall meetings. These gatherings offer civil servants an opportunity to engage directly with the head of the service, share their concerns, and offer suggestions for improvement. This gesture is significant. For too long, the civil service has been seen as an impersonal machine where decisions are made from above with little regard for the people who keep it running. Walson-Jack's town hall meetings are a clear statement that she values the voices of those working within the system.

But town hall meetings are more than just a symbolic gesture. They are a critical tool for building trust, fostering open communication, and promoting a sense of ownership among civil servants. When employees feel heard and valued, their morale naturally improves, and they become more invested in the work they do. This kind of direct engagement with leadership is exactly what the civil service needs to reinvigorate a sense of purpose and commitment among its workforce.

Reintroducing pride in service

One of the most striking initiatives introduced by Walson-Jack is the reintroduction of the civil service anthem. At first glance, this may seem like a minor or ceremonial act, but it carries significant weight. The civil service anthem is more than just a song—it is a reminder of the values, mission, and duty that civil servants uphold. By reinstating this tradition, Walson-Jack aims to remind employees that they are part of something bigger than themselves, that their work matters, and that they play a crucial role in the functioning of the country.

The reintroduction of the anthem is a clear example of how leadership can use symbols to inspire and motivate.

Pride in one's work is a powerful motivator, and the civil service anthem serves as a rallying point for civil servants, encouraging them to take pride in their roles and responsibilities. It reinforces a collective identity, a sense of belonging, and a shared commitment to national service.

Focusing on employee welfare

Motivational leadership goes beyond words and symbols—it must translate into tangible actions that improve the lives of employees. Mrs. Walson-Jack has recognized that civil servants are the lifeblood of government operations, and their well-being directly impacts their productivity. Her administration has placed a strong emphasis on improving employee welfare, with initiatives that address both physical and mental health.

By prioritizing the welfare of civil servants, Walson-Jack is addressing one of the key factors that contribute to low morale: a lack of support for employees. In her speeches and engagements, she has consistently stressed that civil servants are the greatest asset of the service and that their development, job satisfaction, and well-being are top priorities. Her leadership's focus on creating a supportive, healthy working environment sends a strong message that the civil service values its people and is committed to their personal and professional growth.

The role of technology and innovation

In addition to focusing on morale-boosting initiatives, Walson-Jack's leadership has been characterized by a forward-thinking approach, particularly in her emphasis on technology and innovation. She has repeatedly stressed the need for civil servants to embrace digitalization, as seen in her push for the computer-based promotion exams. This transition from paper-based tests to digital platforms is more than just a practical upgrade—it symbolizes a larger shift towards modernization in the civil service. By encouraging civil servants to become more tech-savvy, Walson-Jack is preparing the workforce for the challenges of a digital world, where efficiency and technological literacy are key to success.

This focus on innovation is essential. In a world that is rapidly evolving, the civil service cannot afford to lag behind. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and embracing new technologies, Walson-Jack is ensuring that the civil service remains relevant, efficient, and capable of meeting the demands of a modern Nigeria.

Motivational leadership as a catalyst for productivity

Motivational leadership is not just about inspiring people—it is about creating an environment where people feel empowered to do their best work. Mrs. Walson-Jack's initiatives demonstrate a keen understanding of this principle. By fostering open communication, reinstating pride in service, prioritizing employee welfare, and pushing for innovation, she is laying the foundation for a more productive and motivated civil service.

The civil service has long been plagued by inefficiencies, and while structural reforms are critical, they are not enough on their own. Without addressing the morale and motivation of the workforce, even the most well-intentioned reforms will fall flat. Walson-Jack's approach recognizes that the key to unlocking the potential of the civil service lies in empowering its people. A motivated, well-supported workforce is more likely to be productive, innovative, and committed to delivering high-quality public services.

A call to action for civil servants

As we reflect on the leadership of Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, it is important to recognize that the responsibility for revitalizing the civil service does not rest solely on her shoulders. Every civil servant has a role to play in this transformation. The reintroduction of the civil service anthem, the emphasis on welfare, and the push for innovation are all important steps, but they will only be effective if they are embraced by the entire workforce.

Civil servants must rise to the occasion, take ownership of their roles, and commit to upholding the values of accountability, professionalism, and efficiency. This is a pivotal moment for the Nigerian civil service—a chance to rebuild morale, restore pride, and set a new standard for public sector excellence.

In conclusion, Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack's leadership offers a refreshing vision of what the civil service can be: a motivated, efficient, and purpose-driven institution that serves the Nigerian people with integrity and dedication. Her efforts to revive morale and inspire civil servants through initiatives like the civil service anthem, town hall meetings, and welfare programs are a testament to the power of motivational leadership. As we look forward to the future, it is clear that under her leadership, the civil service is poised to become a force for positive change in Nigeria's governance.

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DAYS IN OFFICE

Congratulations

**Mrs. Didi Esther
Walson-Jack OON, mni**

HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF THE FEDERATION

Your appointment was a great honour to us. It was also a befitting crown for you. 100 days after, you have justified in all ramifications that you are indeed capable of steering the nation's Civil Service to greatness. You can always count on our support. Congratulations our dear sister!



Rt. Hon. Frederick Agbedi

Member representing Sagbama/Ekeremor Federal Constituency
and Chairman of the Bayelsa caucus in the National Assembly.

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Federal Civil Service Anthem

STANZA 1

There were obstacles and there were hurdles that we had to face
 There were challenges and there were struggles that we had to grace,
 Now there is a sound of change that is coming
 A journey to works of transforming
 And rebuilding a system that will stand the test of time,
 Yes, we're building a system that will stand the test of time.

BRIDGE

Efficient, productive, incorruptible
 Citizen-centered and EPIC culture

CHORUS

This is the Federal Civil Service
 Our mission is clear as day
 This is a call for transformation
 This is a vision for change
 A citizen-centered EPIC culture
 Join us to move Nigeria forward
 This is the Federal Civil Service
 We are marching to greatness

STANZA 2

Creating new possibilities, rebuilding capacity
 Serving the people with excellence and honesty
 Where there's a drive, where there's inspiration
 Partnership and innovation

Yes!! We're building a system that will stand the test of time – 2x

CHORUS

This is the Federal Civil Service
 Our mission is clear as day
 This is a call for transformation
 This is a vision for change
 A citizen-centered EPIC culture
 Join us to move Nigeria forward
 This is the Federal Civil Service
 We are marching to greatness
 Oh! Oh!! Marching to greatness

STANZA 3

Where technology meets innovation for sustainability
 Civil servants rewarded for excellence and creativity
 Yes, let's trust the Federal Civil Service brings hope for our country.....

CHORUS

This is the Federal Civil Service
 Our mission is clear as day
 This is a call for transformation
 This is a vision for change
 A citizen-centered EPIC culture
 Join us to move Nigeria forward
 This is the Federal Civil Service
 We are marching to greatness

RESPONSEE..P...I...C culture

Marching to greatness



Civil

SERVICE NEWS

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**Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack:
An Exemplary Leader
in Public Service**

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Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack:

An Exemplary Leader in Public Service

Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni, is a public servant of exceptional distinction and dedication, whose career has spanned more than three decades. Her journey through the Nigerian civil service, both at the state and federal levels, reflects an unwavering commitment to the principles of integrity, innovation, and reform. As the current Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Walson-Jack's leadership continues to shape the future of public administration in Nigeria.

Born on August 27, 1966, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, to parents from Tombia, Ekpetiama Clan, Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, she has consistently demonstrated a drive to serve her community and country. Her early years laid the foundation for the distinguished career that would follow, beginning with her primary education at Rumukurush Primary School, Shell Camp, and St. Paul's Primary School, Diobu, all in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Her secondary education took her to Federal Government Girls' College, Benin City, Edo State, and later, Federal Government College, Ilorin, Kwara State, where her leadership potential began to emerge.

Mrs. Walson-Jack went on to earn a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Lagos and was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1987. In addition to her legal qualifications, she is a Certified Legislative Drafter and a Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building Practitioner, which have contributed to her notable career in public administration.

A pioneering public servant in Bayelsa State

Her journey in public service began in 1992, when she was appointed as a State Counsel in the Rivers State Ministry of Justice. Four years later, in 1996, with the creation of Bayelsa State, she transferred her service there. As the only certified legal drafter in the newly created state, Mrs. Walson-Jack wore multiple hats, taking on the roles of Head of the Legal Drafting Department of the Ministry of Justice and Head of the Legal Department of the State House of Assembly, which she established. Her ability to navigate both the executive and legislative arms of the state government demonstrated her exceptional capacity for leadership and governance, despite the lack of human resources available in the fledgling state.

Her trajectory in Bayelsa State government was marked by numerous significant appointments. As Solicitor-General of Bayelsa State and later Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, she played a key role in strengthening the legal framework of the state. Her service extended further, with her appointments as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor, Pioneer Commissioner of the Ministry of Science & Technology and Manpower Development, and Chief of Staff to the Governor. In each role, Mrs. Walson-Jack's vision for public service excellence shone through, setting her apart as a dynamic and innovative leader.

The transition to the federal civil service

In 2009, Mrs. Walson-Jack transitioned to the Federal Civil Service, joining as Assistant Director of Administration in the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, with responsibilities for Appointment and Discipline. Her ascent was swift, and in 2017, she was appointed Permanent Secretary in the Federal Civil Service, marking a new chapter in her public service career. Over the years, she has served as Permanent Secretary in various

ministries, including Power, Water Resources, Education, and the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, among others.

As Permanent Secretary, she was instrumental in leading several transformative initiatives. Most notably, she pioneered the Service Welfare Office and introduced the Rewards and Recognition System, which incentivized excellence among civil servants. Under her leadership, the Federal Integrated Staff Housing (FISH) Programme was revitalized, providing affordable housing solutions for civil servants. Her expertise in labor relations as **Chair of the Joint National Public Service Negotiating Council** helped to ensure industrial harmony across the civil service during her tenure.

A reformer at heart

Mrs. Walson-Jack's reformist vision has been a driving force behind numerous policy developments at the federal level. She played a pivotal role in the Tripartite and Technical Committees on National Minimum Wage and Consequential Adjustments, contributing to the negotiation and implementation of a new wage structure for civil servants. Her efforts also extended to the Civil Service Exit Management Programme, which provided pre-retirement training, offboarding services, and post-retirement schemes, ensuring that retiring civil servants were well-prepared for life after public service.

Furthermore, she initiated the Public Service Emergency Management Framework, the Civil Service Welfare Policy, and the establishment of a Centralized Counseling Centre, all of which aimed to enhance the well-being and safety of civil servants. Her attention to marginalized groups was evident in the Baseline Survey of Persons with Disabilities and the development of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Policy, which ensured that the workplace remained inclusive and safe for all employees.

These groundbreaking initiatives have had a profound impact on the efficiency, transparency, and professionalism of the Nigerian Civil Service, earning her a reputation as one of the most effective reformers in public service today.

Head of Civil Service of the Federation

In July 2024, Mrs. Walson-Jack was appointed Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, a role that places her at the helm of the nation's civil service structure. In this capacity, she serves as the chief policy adviser on all civil service matters, ensuring the smooth implementation of government policies and programs. Her leadership has been marked by a focus on modernizing the civil service, ensuring that it remains responsive to the needs of the Nigerian people, and driving forward the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu.

Awards and recognition

Mrs. Walson-Jack's contributions to public service have not gone unnoticed. She is a recipient of the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON), one of the highest national honors in Nigeria, awarded for her outstanding service to the nation. Additionally, she is an alumna of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, where



Her ability to navigate both the executive and legislative arms of the state government demonstrated her exceptional capacity for leadership and governance, despite the lack of human resources available in the fledgling state.

she further honed her leadership skills and strategic thinking capabilities.

Personal life and legacy

Beyond her professional achievements, Mrs. Walson-Jack is a devoted wife and mother. She has been married to Hon. Nimi Walson-Jack for over 35 years, and together they have raised two children and are proud grandparents. Her family life, marked by love, resilience, and faith, is a source of inspiration to those around her.

Mrs. Walson-Jack is also a published author, having written her autobiography, "Roses in the Thorns," which tells the story of her remarkable journey and the triumph of faith over adversity. The book is a testament to her strength, resilience, and ability to rise above challenges, offering inspiration to women and public servants alike.

Conclusion

Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack embodies the essence of public service. Her career, spanning state and federal service, is a testament to her unwavering commitment to the people of Nigeria. As Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, she continues to lead with vision, reforming and modernizing the civil service to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Her legacy will undoubtedly inspire future generations of public servants, and her impact on Nigerian governance will be felt for many years to come.

Stories By: Gift Markson

In a significant step towards improving the welfare of Nigeria's civil servants, the Federal Government in September commenced the payment of the new N70,000 minimum wage and consequential salary adjustments. This development comes after months of negotiations aimed at aligning public sector salaries with the current economic realities. Over 1.2 million civil servants across various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) will now benefit from this increase, raising the Federal Government's wage bill to an estimated N4.019 trillion annually.

The salary increase is part of the Federal Government's broader effort to improve living conditions for civil servants, an initiative that aligns closely with the *ongoing civil service reforms* led by the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, ****Didi Esther Walson-Jack****. These reforms, encapsulated in the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025, aim to create a more efficient and productive civil service, while promoting integrity and transparency.

As Walson-Jack reintroduces the Civil Service Anthem, the recent salary increase serves as further motivation for public servants to embrace the values of efficiency, productivity, incorruptibility, and citizen-centered service**. Speaking at a media event, the Head of Service underscored the importance of reforms and the

FG Implements N70,000 Minimum Wage: A Major Boost for Civil Servants



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni (middle), presenting a copy of the signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) on Consequential Adjustments in Salaries to the National Chairman, JNPSNC Comrade Benjamin Anthony (L), while the Chairman, National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, Mr Ekpo Nta (R), looks on.

necessity of keeping civil servants motivated to deliver on the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu.

The commencement of the new minimum wage follows the signing of a warrant by the Accountant-General of the Federation, Dr. Oluwatoyin Madein, which formalized the new payment structure. This marks a critical milestone in the government's commitment to improving public sector compensation, a move that has been welcomed by labor unions, including the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the

Trade Union Congress (TUC).

However, the reaction from civil servants has been mixed. While some welcome the increase, others argue that it is insufficient given the current economic challenges. A Grade Level 12 officer voiced concerns over the disparity between the salary adjustment and the harsh realities faced by Nigerians, noting that the increase does not fully address the rising cost of living.

Despite these concerns, the government's introduction of the new wage is a major milestone in its effort to

alleviate the economic strain on civil servants. The National Income, Salaries and Wages Commission provided a detailed breakdown of what each cadre will earn under the new structure. For instance, Grade Level 1 officers will now earn N930,000 per annum, while senior officers on Grade Level 17, such as permanent secretaries, will receive an annual salary of N6.9 million.

Walson-Jack's leadership, paired with the government's commitment to a more equitable wage structure, reflects the ongoing transformation of Nigeria's

civil service. The reintroduction of the civil service anthem further solidifies the reform agenda, with public servants expected to embrace a renewed sense of duty, driven by the values of professionalism and ethical service.

As Nigeria moves forward with these reforms, the Head of Service's strides in ensuring the

well-being of civil servants will be central to the successful implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

With a focus on uplifting both the morale and productivity of the workforce, the civil service is being positioned to deliver meaningful and impactful governance to the Nigerian people.

NAF Opens 2024 Graduate Recruitment for Direct Short Service Commission

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has officially opened its recruitment process for the 2024 Direct Short Service Commission (DSSC33/2024), targeting graduates and post-graduates to join as officers in various professional disciplines.

The recruitment drive, which began on October 14, 2024, offers an opportunity for qualified Nigerians to embark on a career in the military.

In a statement signed by Air Vice Marshal AH Bakari, on behalf of the Chief of the Air Staff, the NAF emphasized that the application process is free and must be completed online via the official recruitment portal at www.nafrecruitment.airforce.mil.ng (<http://www.nafrecruitment.airforce.mil.ng>). Interested applicants have until November 26, 2024, to submit their applications.

Qualification Requirements

Academic qualifications are also important. Applicants must possess a Second-Class Upper Division for degree holders or an Upper Credit for Higher National Diploma (HND) holders. Additionally, candidates should have credits in English, Mathematics, and three other subjects relevant to their area of study. Computer literacy is an added advantage.

Candidates must have completed the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme and be prepared to submit either a Discharge Certificate or a Letter of Exemption. Where applicable, registration with relevant professional bodies in Nigeria is also a requirement.

Testing and Selection Process

An aptitude test will be part of the selection process, with details on the date and location to be communicated via the NAF recruitment portal. Applicants are advised to monitor the portal regularly for updates. Any false declarations or attempts to submit multiple applications will lead to disqualification.

Required Documents for Application

Once applications are submitted and validated, candidates must print the following documents to complete the process:

- Local Government Area Attestation Form (signed by a Military/Police Officer or other approved authorities).
- Parent/Guardian Consent Form.
- Attestation of Good Character Form.
- Acknowledgment Form.

Invalid applications will not generate these forms, so it is important for candidates to ensure they meet all requirements before submitting.

For further inquiries, applicants can visit the Nigerian Air Force website or contact the NAF through the following support lines: 07052683575 and 07030562381. Alternatively, they may email inquiries to careers@airforce.mil.ng.

This recruitment drive provides a platform for young Nigerian professionals to serve their country while contributing their expertise in various fields.

Application process and guidelines

The NAF advises applicants to carefully read the required qualifications and disciplines before submitting their applications, warning that errors or multiple submissions will result in automatic disqualification. "Only one application can be made, and once submitted, it cannot be corrected. Multiple applications will result in disqualification," the statement read.

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for the Direct Short Service Commission, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be Nigerian by birth.
- Male applicants must meet a minimum height requirement of 1.66 meters, while female applicants must be at least 1.63 meters tall.
- Applicants must be medically, physically, and psychologically fit.
- Must have no criminal convictions.
- Age requirement: Candidates must be between 20 and 30 years old. However, Medical Consultants are eligible if they fall within the age range of 25 to 40 years.

Meeting all these conditions is critical, as failure to do so will result in disqualification.

Nigeria, UK Collaborate to Advance Civil Service Reforms

In a significant step toward strengthening bilateral ties and advancing Civil Service reforms, the Heads of the Civil Services of Nigeria and the United Kingdom have agreed to collaborate on knowledge sharing, capacity building, and reform strategies.

This development was announced in a statement issued by Eno Olotu, Head of Information and Public Relations, Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

The agreement was reached during a high-level meeting between the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation of Nigeria, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni, and the UK Cabinet Secretary, Rt. Hon. Simon Case. The meeting, held at the UK Cabinet Office in London, focused on leveraging expertise and insights to enhance Nigeria's ongoing reforms under the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan (FCSSIP) 2021-2025.

Strategic focus areas

The dialogue centered on critical areas such as capacity building, knowledge management, and improving Nigeria's Civil Service Week



(R-L): Head of the Civil Service of the Federation of Nigeria, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack OON, mni and UK Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, Rt. Hon. Simon Case

activities. Drawing inspiration from the UK's renowned "Civil Service Live" conference, the partnership aims to enrich Nigeria's celebration of its Civil Service Week with new ideas and models.

Both nations also committed to exploring exchange programmes and study tours to foster mutual learning. The UK pledged to

provide insights into its Civil Service development practices, while also valuing the opportunity to learn from Nigeria's reform experiences.

Building a world-class civil service

Mrs. Walson-Jack expressed her optimism about the collaboration, stating, "This

partnership underscores our commitment to building a world-class Civil Service that is responsive, efficient, and equipped to meet the demands of modern governance."

Rt. Hon. Simon Case lauded the initiative, emphasizing the importance of mutual learning in addressing global challenges in public administration. He added, "The UK Civil Service looks forward to working closely with our Nigerian counterparts to exchange ideas and best practices that will benefit both nations."

A commitment to reform and progress

The meeting highlighted the shared commitment of both countries to developing efficient Civil Services capable of delivering excellence in governance. The collaborative efforts, supported by exchange programmes and joint initiatives, will strengthen ties and accelerate the realization of reform goals. As both Civil Services work towards fostering innovation and responsiveness, the partnership is expected to create a lasting impact, contributing to the transformation of public sector operations in Nigeria and setting the stage for deeper collaboration in the years to come.



HCSF, Mrs Didi-Esther Walson- Jack, OON, mni with Team Leads and Co- Team-Leads during the inauguration of War Rooms.



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni, received on a courtesy visit to her office, members of the Federal Government Girls' College (FGGC), Benin Old Girls' Association (Abuja chapter), led by the President, Dr (Mrs) Iwaeye Osaze-Uzzi on Friday, 4th October, 2024.



HCSF, Mrs Didi Walson-Jack, OON, mni, maiden meeting with OHCSF Union Executives on Monday 2nd September 2024, in Abuja.



HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni (3rd L) in a group Photograph with Permanent Secretary Common Services Office, Mr Raymond Omachi, (2nd L), Permanent Secretary, Service Policies and Strategies Office, Dr. Deborah Bako Odoh(3rd R), Permanent Secretary Career Management Office, Mrs Fatima Mahmood(2nd R), Director Overseeing Office of Permanent Secretary, Service Welfare Office, Dr. Comfort Adeosun(1st L) and Director Overseeing Office of Permanent Secretary, Special Duties Office, Mrs Agalasi Ehigie (1st R) after signing their Performance Contracts, on Wednesday, 4th September, 2024 in Abuja.



The HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni in a group photograph with Federal Permanent Secretaries, at the Opening Ceremony of the Retreat, in Niger State.



The HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni in a group photograph with Federal Permanent Secretaries, at the Closing Ceremony of the Retreat, in Niger State.



The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni (seated middle), in a group photograph with the National Chairman, JNPSNC Comrade Benjamin Anthony (2nd L), Chairman, National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, Mr Ekpo Nta (2nd R), Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Alhaji Ismaila Abubakar (1st R) and National President, NUPSTRAW, Comrade Roselyn Uba Anarah (1st L) and other members at the Inauguration of the Committee on Consequential Adjustments in Salaries, on Friday, 13th September, in Abuja.



Governor Douye Diri and Team Extend Appreciation to President Tinubu for Strengthening Bayelsa's Role in National Development through key appointments



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs Didi Esther Walsen-Jack OON, mni, on September 24, paid a courtesy visit to the Rivers State Governor, Sir. Siminalayi Fubara at the Government House, Port Harcourt. The Head of Service was in the State to represent His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR at the 2024 Annual National Management Conference of the Nigerian Institute of Management.



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walsen-Jack, OON, mni, in a group photograph with Permanent Secretaries and the technical committee members during the launch of the Federal Civil Service Online Compendium of Circulars in Abuja.



HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walsen-Jack, OON, mni (5th R), President of AANI Alumni, Ambassador Emmanuel Obi Okafor, mni (6th R) and other members of AANI Alumni during a courtesy visit to the OHCSF, in Abuja.



Representative of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR and Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walsen-Jack OON, mni (L) presented with the Special Guest of Honour plaque by the President and Chairman, Nigerian Institute of Management Council, Dr (Mrs) Christiana Atako FNIM®.



HCSF Retreat with Perm Secretaries



The HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walsen-Jack, OON, mni, with Permanent Secretaries in a group photograph with the management team of Federal College Ilorin Old Student Association (FGIOSA), during the courtesy visit to the HCSF in her office.



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walsen-Jack OON, mni during the inspection visit to the Ansar- ur- Deen Resource Centre., Maitama, Abuja, one of the Venues of the Compro Examination held, Wednesday, 2nd October, 2024.



HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack, OON, mni, with the Management of the Office at the Interactive Session with House Committee on Public Service Matters, Thursday, 31st October, 2024.



HCSF, Mrs. Didi Esther Walsom-Jack OON, mni in an handshake with The Special Adviser to the President on Policy Coordination and Head of Central Delivery and Coordination Unit, Mrs. Hadiza Bala-Uzman during a courtesy visit to the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation on Wednesday, 30th October, 2024 in Abuja.



L-R: Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack, OON, mni, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mrs Amina Mohammed, during the Committee Meeting of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York, United States recently.



Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mrs Amina Mohammed (M), Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack, OON, mni (R) and Senior Special Assistant to the President on Civil Affairs Matters, Mr Alfred Abah (L), during the Committee Meeting of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York, United States recently.



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack, OON, mni (m) in a group photograph with the Permanent Secretary, State House, Engr Adebisi Olufunso (6th from right) during an unscheduled visit yesterday to the State House to ascertain the level of compliance of the Office with the FCSSIP-25 PMS and Digitalisation processes



HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack OON, mni inspecting facilities at the fitness and wellness centre for staff, OHCSF.



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack, OON, mni, Wednesday, 25th September, 2024 received briefings from the Provosts of the 6 Federal Training Centers, (Kaduna, Calabar, Enugu, Ilorin, Lagos and Maiduguri) in her Office



Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walsom-Jack, OON, mni, bringing Provosts of the Federal Training Centres up to speed on FCSSIP-25 reforms during the briefing.

■ Launching of PMS Day in a Special Way in the Federal Ministry of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs



■ PMS Workshop Organized for Directors of the Ministry with AIG Imoukhuede Foundation Team





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Senator Henry Seriake Dickson
Bayelsa West Senatorial District
(Governor of Bayelsa State 2012 to 2020)



...the task ahead is monumental. Bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, and a lack of modernization must be tackled head-on if real progress is to be made...

Challenges, Expectations, and Reform:

The Role of Walson-Jack in Rebuilding Nigeria's Civil Service

By: **Ebere Ndukwu**

Nigeria's civil service, the backbone of governance and the machinery that powers public administration, has long faced challenges that have hindered its performance. Issues of corruption, inefficiency, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and a lack of transparency have plagued the system for decades. Now, with the appointment of Didi Esther Walson-Jack as the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HoS), there is renewed hope that the Nigerian civil service will finally undergo the reforms necessary to restore its effectiveness and relevance. But with this hope come high expectations, as she embarks on the monumental task of steering this essential institution through troubled waters.

Historical Context: A system in crisis

The Nigerian civil service, once respected for its professionalism and efficiency, has experienced a sharp decline over the years. In the immediate post-independence period, the civil service played a pivotal role in nation-building, with skilled administrators ensuring the smooth operation of government affairs. However, this

legacy was soon eroded by systemic corruption, nepotism, and inefficiencies that have entrenched themselves in the system.

Today, the civil service is seen by many Nigerians as a symbol of the country's administrative dysfunction. Endless paperwork, a lack of accountability, and corruption have fostered an environment where public servants are often perceived as obstacles to progress rather than facilitators. The problem is not merely one of perception; it is a lived reality for many Nigerians who depend on government services for their daily lives.

For years, reforms aimed at tackling these issues have been proposed but have seen little to no implementation. A notable example is the **Steven Oronsaye Report** of 2011, which recommended the reduction and restructuring of the government's bloated ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) to make the system more efficient. Despite its well-documented benefits, successive administrations have failed to implement these recommendations fully, leaving the civil service overstuffed and underperforming.

Key challenges facing the civil service

1. **Bureaucratic Bottlenecks:** Bureaucracy, in theory, exists to ensure that government decisions are made through proper channels, maintaining checks and balances. However, in Nigeria, excessive bureaucracy has become a major impediment to effective governance. The civil service is rife with endless layers of paperwork, approval processes, and convoluted procedures that delay services and frustrate citizens. This has led to an inefficient system where tasks that should take days or weeks drag on for months.

As noted by Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, a leading advocate for public service reforms, during the 2024 Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation workshop, "This inefficient public service is holding us back. And you would agree that there's a correlation between the strength of a country's public sector and its strength as a nation."

2. **Corruption and the ghost worker syndrome:** Corruption within the civil service has been one of the most pervasive challenges. One manifestation of this is the 'ghost worker' syndrome,

where individuals who are not employed by the government continue to receive salaries. In 2014, the Federal Government uncovered 60,000 ghost workers, followed by another 50,000 in subsequent investigations. This resulted in savings of over N160 billion annually. However, despite these discoveries, the problem persists.

The Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) was introduced to tackle payroll fraud, but even this has been undermined. For example, a former Accountant-General of the Federation is currently on trial for embezzling N109.4 billion, exploiting the very system meant to prevent such fraud. The ghost worker problem points to a broader issue: the lack of effective oversight and accountability in payroll management.

3. **Nepotism and underground recruitment:** One of the most damaging practices within the civil service is the prevalence of underground recruitment. This refers to the hiring of individuals based on personal connections rather than merit, which has resulted in an unmotivated and incompetent workforce. This system of patronage not only reduces the efficiency of the civil service

but also alienates qualified professionals who could have made a significant difference in the performance of public institutions.

4. Lack of modern skills and digital literacy: In an era where digital transformation is sweeping through both public and private sectors globally, Nigeria's civil service has been slow to adopt modern technological practices. This delay has further exacerbated inefficiencies. Many civil servants lack the digital literacy and skills necessary to keep up with 21st-century governance demands. As Professor Peter Okebukola, former Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, emphasized during a lecture in 2024, "We must run programmes for civil servants on problem-solving, teamwork, digital literacy, and media literacy to prepare them for future work environments." Without a comprehensive digital transformation, the civil service will struggle to meet modern governance challenges.

Expectations from Didi Walson-Jack's leadership

As the first female Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Didi Walson-Jack's appointment comes with a significant sense of anticipation. Her previous track record in public administration positions her as someone capable of effecting real change, and the challenges she faces are daunting. Nonetheless, she has several key areas where her leadership could make an immediate and lasting impact.

1. Tackling corruption head-on: The first expectation for Walson-Jack is to bring a renewed focus on tackling corruption within the civil service. This includes addressing the ghost worker syndrome, which continues to drain resources meant for genuine employees. Implementing stringent audit processes, improving oversight of the payroll system, and strengthening the IPPIS could help to root out fraudulent activities.

Additionally, she must ensure that civil servants who are found guilty of corruption face consequences, setting an example for others. This could involve collaborating with anti-corruption bodies like the **Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC)** and the **Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)** to expedite the prosecution of corrupt officials.

2. Overhauling the recruitment process: For the civil service to regain its effectiveness, recruitment must be overhauled. Walson-Jack's leadership will be critical in ensuring that positions are filled based on merit, not connections. This will require creating transparent recruitment processes, perhaps leveraging technology to minimize human interference and opportunities for corruption.

To create a motivated workforce, it is essential to promote professionalism and fairness. Walson-Jack could lead efforts to implement a performance-based evaluation system that rewards hard work and competence. This could



Walson-Jack's leadership will be critical in ensuring that positions are filled based on merit, not connections. This will require creating transparent recruitment processes, perhaps leveraging technology to minimize human interference and opportunities for corruption.

also help reduce the instances of underperformance, as employees will know they are being evaluated on their output.

3. Streamlining bureaucratic processes: The bureaucratic bottlenecks that slow down service delivery must be addressed. A major area where Walson-Jack could make a difference is by simplifying approval processes and eliminating redundant steps. Adopting e-governance systems to digitize public administration could lead to faster, more efficient government operations. For instance, countries like Rwanda have achieved significant efficiency in their public service through the digitization of various processes.

4. Digital transformation and training: For the civil service to be prepared for the future, Walson-Jack must prioritize the digital transformation of public administration. Training civil servants in digital literacy, ICT, and other necessary skills will be key to ensuring that the workforce can handle the complexities of modern governance. This could include partnerships with educational institutions and private sector players to develop tailored training programs that meet the specific needs of civil servants.

Professor Okebukola's recommendations align with this, as he has advocated for government programmes that equip civil servants with 21st-century skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and curiosity. Walson-Jack's leadership in this area could set the civil service on a path toward modernization and improved service delivery.

5. Implementing existing reform reports: Many reform

recommendations, such as the Oronsaye Report, have already laid out a clear path toward a more efficient and transparent civil service. One key expectation is that Walson-Jack will have the political will to implement these long-overdue reforms. This includes downsizing bloated MDAs and merging redundant institutions, as outlined in the report. However, implementing these reforms will require overcoming entrenched political interests, which may resist change.

Potential solutions for civil service reform

While the challenges facing Nigeria's civil service are significant, there are clear paths to reform that Walson-Jack can pursue.

1. Establishing a National Civil Service Reform Task Force: To address the widespread issues, Walson-Jack could champion the creation of a dedicated reform task force, which would oversee the implementation of key reforms. This task force could work with international bodies and private sector experts to guide the civil service through the necessary transformations.

2. E-Government and Process Automation: Adopting an e-government framework, where many bureaucratic processes are automated, can drastically reduce delays and inefficiencies. Walson-Jack can promote the digitization of civil service functions, including applications, approvals, and payroll management. This would improve transparency and cut down on opportunities for corruption.

3. Cultural Shift in Civil Service: Perhaps the most difficult, but most important, reform is to bring about a cultural change in the civil service. Promoting values of integrity, hard work, and accountability is crucial. Walson-Jack's role in fostering this cultural shift could involve setting up ethics committees, encouraging whistleblowing, and implementing robust disciplinary measures for misconduct.

4. Collaborating with Anti-Corruption Agencies: Walson-Jack can enhance collaboration with anti-corruption bodies such as the ICPC and EFCC to monitor the civil service and hold corrupt officials accountable.

Conclusion

The Nigerian civil service stands at a critical juncture. Didi Walson-Jack's appointment as the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation comes with high expectations. Her leadership offers an opportunity to steer the civil service toward greater efficiency, transparency, and accountability. However, the task ahead is monumental. Bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, and a lack of modernization must be tackled head-on if real progress is to be made.

Walson-Jack has the experience and skills needed to implement these reforms, but she will need the political will, support from civil servants, and collaboration from key stakeholders to make lasting changes. Nigerians are eager to see a civil service that works for them—a system that supports, rather than hinders, the country's growth and development.



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Balancing work and personal life can sometimes feel like an impossible task, especially for civil service workers who often face the pressures of long hours and mounting responsibilities. Yet, achieving a healthy work-life balance is essential for both personal well-being and professional productivity. When balance is neglected, the risks of stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction can significantly increase.

In this article, we will explore what work-life balance really means, the causes of poor balance, and provide 17 practical tips to help civil service workers improve their day-to-day work-life equilibrium.

What is work-life balance?

Work-life balance is about finding harmony between your personal and professional responsibilities. It's the state where the demands of work are balanced with the needs of personal interests and family life. When this balance is achieved, several positive effects emerge: reduced stress, improved health, increased productivity, and a sense of fulfillment.

What causes poor work-life balance?

For many Nigerian civil servants, the boundaries between work and home life are often blurred due to:

- **Increased Responsibility at Work:** A growing to-do list can lead to feelings of overwhelm.
- **Longer Working Hours:** Spending extended hours at the office can erode personal time.
- **Lack of Flexibility:** Rigid work schedules make it difficult to manage personal commitments.
- **Poor Time Management:** Without good planning, the line between work and home can disappear.

Why is work-life balance important?

The benefits of achieving work-life balance are profound. It boosts productivity, prevents burnout, enhances physical and mental well-being, and increases job satisfaction. More importantly, a healthy balance leads to improved morale, making you more engaged and effective at work.

17 tips for improving work-life balance

Now that we understand its importance, here are 17 actionable tips to help you achieve a better work-life balance in your daily routine.

- 1. Take Regular Breaks:** During the workday, take regular breaks to recharge. A quick walk around the office or stepping outside for fresh air can improve focus and relieve stress.
- 2. Master Time Management:** Use planners, calendars, or digital tools to organize your day. Prioritize tasks, set time limits, and avoid multitasking to stay productive without feeling overwhelmed.
- 3. Set Clear Boundaries:** Establish boundaries between work and home life. Let colleagues know your work hours and stick to them. Avoid bringing work home unless absolutely necessary.
- 4. Plan Vacation Days:** Take advantage of your vacation days, even if it's for a staycation. Use this time to disconnect from work and enjoy rest and relaxation.
- 5. Work from Home (If Possible):** Where allowed, working from home can provide a welcome break from commuting and rigid schedules. However, create a routine to ensure productivity and prevent work from blending into personal time.
- 6. Make Time for Exercise:** Physical activity is a great stress reliever. Even a simple walk, stretching, or a workout session at home can help boost your mood



How to Improve Work-Life Balance: 17 Tips for Success



Achieving work-life balance is not about perfection but progress. For Nigerian civil service workers, these tips can help create a healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle that fosters both career success and personal happiness. Start small by incorporating a few of these strategies, and over time, you'll notice the positive impact on your well-being and productivity.

and energy levels.

7. Create a Support System: Lean on friends, family, or colleagues for support. Sharing your workload or seeking advice can help lighten the burden and offer new perspectives.

8. Prioritize Top Tasks: Each day, focus on completing the most important tasks first. This will give you a sense of accomplishment and make the rest of the day more manageable.

9. Practice Self-Compassion: Don't be too hard on yourself if things don't always go as planned. Remember that perfection isn't necessary, and it's okay to have off days.

10. Encourage Flexible Schedules: If you're in a leadership position, consider implementing flexible working hours or remote work options for your team. Flexibility can help improve work-life balance for everyone.

11. Volunteer for Community Projects: Volunteering helps improve your sense of purpose and well-being. It allows you to engage with others and contribute positively to your community, reducing stress.

12. Unplug After Work: Once you leave the office, resist the urge to check work emails or take calls. This mental break is important to recharge for the next day.

13. Socialize with Family and Friends: Spend quality time with your loved ones. This can boost your emotional health and

make you more resilient in facing workplace challenges.

14. Communicate Effectively: Learn to communicate your workload and capacity to others. Whether with your boss or colleagues, being transparent about your limits will help manage expectations.

15. Invest in Personal Growth: Engage in hobbies or educational pursuits outside of work. Whether it's learning a new skill or reading for pleasure, personal development can refresh your mind and spirit.

16. Take Advantage of Employee Programs: Many workplaces offer health and wellness programs, such as gym memberships or health talks. Taking advantage of these can contribute to your overall well-being.

17. Seek Help When Needed: If you're struggling with maintaining balance, don't hesitate to ask for help. Whether it's speaking to a supervisor about workload management or consulting a professional, getting support can make all the difference.

Achieving work-life balance is not about perfection but progress. For Nigerian civil service workers, these tips can help create a healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle that fosters both career success and personal happiness. Start small by incorporating a few of these strategies, and over time, you'll notice the positive impact on your well-being and productivity.

In today's demanding world, balance is the key to long-term success and happiness.



Being mindful of what you eat on an empty stomach can help you avoid discomfort and set a positive tone for the day. Incorporating these tips and avoiding problematic foods can enhance your overall well-being!...Drinking water or herbal teas can help prepare your stomach for food and aid digestion. Hydration is key to maintaining overall health.

Foods to Avoid on an Empty Stomach: Impact on Health, Well-Being

Eating on an empty stomach can significantly affect how your body processes food and your overall health. Certain foods can lead to discomfort, digestive issues, or even long-term health concerns when consumed without prior nourishment. Here's a list of foods to avoid and the reasons behind it:

1. Citrus Fruits

- *Examples:* Oranges, lemons, and grapefruits.

- *Why to Avoid:* These fruits are highly acidic and can irritate the stomach lining, potentially causing heartburn or discomfort. It's best to enjoy them after having a balanced meal.

2. Coffee

- *Why to Avoid:* Coffee is acidic and can lead to increased stomach acid production, which may cause digestive issues or discomfort. If you crave coffee in the morning, consider pairing it with a light snack.

3. Sugary Foods

- *Examples:* Pastries, candy, and sugary cereals.

- *Why to Avoid:* High-sugar foods can cause a rapid spike in blood sugar followed by a crash, leading to energy dips and cravings shortly after. Opting for whole foods can provide more sustained energy.

4. Spicy Foods

- *Why to Avoid:* Spices can irritate the stomach lining, causing discomfort, acid

reflux, or heartburn, especially when consumed on an empty stomach. It's advisable to save these for later meals.

5. Raw Vegetables

- *Examples:* Cabbage, broccoli, and bell peppers.

- *Why to Avoid:* While healthy, raw vegetables can be hard to digest on an empty stomach and may lead to bloating or gas. Cooking them can make them easier to digest.

6. Dairy Products

- *Examples:* Milk, yogurt, and cheese.

- *Why to Avoid:* Some individuals may have difficulty digesting lactose when their stomach is empty, leading to discomfort or bloating. Consider non-dairy alternatives if you're sensitive.

7. Alcohol

- *Why to Avoid:* Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach can lead to faster intoxication and increased irritation of the stomach lining, causing nausea or discomfort. It's best consumed after eating.

8. Fried Foods

- *Why to Avoid:* High in fat and difficult to digest, fried foods can lead to discomfort and sluggishness, especially when eaten without any other food. Opt for baked or grilled options instead.

9. Processed Foods

- *Examples:* Instant noodles, ready-made meals, and processed snacks.

- *Why to Avoid:* These foods often contain additives and preservatives that

can be harsh on an empty stomach, leading to digestive issues. Fresh, whole foods are a better choice.

10. White Bread

- *Why to Avoid:* Refined carbohydrates can cause a quick spike in blood sugar and may not provide lasting energy, leaving you feeling hungry soon after. Whole grain options are preferable for sustained energy.

Tips for healthy eating on an empty stomach

- **Opt for a Balanced Breakfast:** Consider foods rich in fiber, protein, and healthy fats, such as oatmeal, eggs, or smoothies. These options help keep you full and satisfied.

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drinking water or herbal teas can help prepare your stomach for food and aid digestion. Hydration is key to maintaining overall health.

Being mindful of what you eat on an empty stomach can help you avoid discomfort and set a positive tone for the day. Incorporating these tips and avoiding problematic foods can enhance your overall well-being!

Disclaimer:

The information provided in this newsletter is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Always consult with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian before making any changes to your diet or exercise routine, especially if you have any underlying health conditions or concerns. Individual responses to foods and dietary changes may vary, and what works for one person may not be suitable for another. The recommendations provided are based on general guidelines and should be adapted to your personal health needs.

Boost Your Health: Simple Exercises for Office Workers



In today's fast-paced work environment, many of us find ourselves glued to our desks for hours on end. While our jobs require focus and dedication, long periods of sitting can take a toll on our health, leading to poor posture, stiffness, and decreased circulation. Fortunately, incorporating simple exercises into your daily routine can significantly improve your well-being.

Here's a quick guide to exercises that can help you stay active, relieve tension, and boost your energy levels right at your office!

1. Desk Stretches

- **Seated Back Twist:** Sit upright and place your right hand on the back of your chair, twisting your torso to the right. Hold for 15-30 seconds and repeat on the other side. This stretch helps improve spinal flexibility and relieves back tension.
- **Neck Stretches:** Slowly tilt your head toward each shoulder and hold for 15-20 seconds. This simple movement can help alleviate neck strain, especially if you're often hunched over your computer.
- **Wrist and Finger Stretch:** Extend your arms in front of you, flex your wrists up and down, and stretch your fingers. This exercise is particularly helpful for those who spend long hours typing, reducing the risk of repetitive strain injuries.

2. Chair Squats

Stand in front of your chair with feet shoulder-width apart. Lower yourself into a squat, stopping just above the chair, then stand back up. Repeat 10-15 times. Chair squats strengthen your legs and glutes, promoting better overall posture.

3. Leg Extensions

While seated, extend one leg straight out and hold for 5-10 seconds before lowering it without touching the floor. Repeat 10-15 times for each leg. This exercise targets the quadriceps and helps improve leg strength.

4. Seated Marching

Lift your knees as if marching in place while sitting. This movement engages your core and boosts circulation in your legs, helping to keep you energized.

5. Shoulder Shrugs

Lift your shoulders toward your ears, hold for a few seconds, then roll them back down. Repeat 10 times. This exercise relieves tension in the shoulders and upper back, areas often stressed by long hours of sitting.

6. Wall Push-Ups

Stand about two feet away from a wall, place your palms on the wall at shoulder height, and perform push-ups. This exercise strengthens your upper body without needing floor space, making it perfect for the office.

7. Standing Calf Raises

Stand behind your chair and rise up onto your toes, then slowly lower back down. Repeat 15-20 times. This movement improves lower leg strength and enhances circulation.

8. Walking Breaks

Take brief walks around the office every hour, even if it's just to get a drink of water. Regular walking helps improve circulation, boosts your mood, and clears your mind.

9. Seated Tummy Tucks

While sitting, pull in your stomach muscles and hold for 10 seconds before releasing. Repeat several times to strengthen your core muscles, which can help improve posture.

10. Standing Hip Stretches

Stand up and place your right ankle over your left knee. Sit back slightly to stretch your hip. Hold for 20-30 seconds, then switch sides. This stretch can alleviate tightness in the hips, a common issue for those who sit for long periods.

Bonus: Deep Breathing Exercises

Take a few moments throughout the day to practice deep breathing. Inhale deeply for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and then exhale for 4 seconds. This simple exercise reduces stress and enhances focus.

Incorporate for Better Health!

Integrating these simple exercises into your workday can counteract the negative effects of prolonged sitting, improve energy levels, and help you feel more comfortable at your desk.

Remember, a little movement goes a long way in promoting a healthier, happier work life!

NEWSFEATURE



Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara (R) in a handshake, welcoming the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni (L) to his office during her visit to the State recently.

Walson-Jack Reiterates Commitment to Building Robust, Responsive Civil Service

...promises to strengthen collaboration with Rivers State Civil Service

By: Gift Markson

The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni has reiterated her commitment to building a more robust, dynamic and responsive Federal Civil Service and expressed readiness to partner with Rivers State in deploying strategic reforms to improve and strengthen the State Civil Service and the general well-being of the people.

Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack made this disclosure during a courtesy visit to the Executive Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency, Siminalayi Fubara, on Monday, September 23, 2024 at the Rivers State Government House, Port-Harcourt.

The HCSF, who was in Rivers State to represent President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, at the 63rd Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Institute of Management Chartered (NIM) in Port-Harcourt, described her visit to the state as homecoming due to her personal affinity with the good people of the state, adding that her career in the Civil Service began in the state.

Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack promised to strengthen the collaborative ties that will enhance social-economic development of the state, as well as putting necessary reform measures in place towards improving the state Civil Service.

She informed the governor of the ongoing reforms at the Federal Civil Service, "At the federal level, our ongoing civil service reforms are focused on performance management and digital transformation to improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

The Head of Service reiterated the need of leveraging on technology in the service. She stated that the world is changing rapidly and technology is indispensable. She informed that the Federal Civil Service has already embraced technology.

"We have embraced digitalisation in the Federal Civil Service to streamline processes, enhance communication, and deliver better services. I look forward to discussing how the federal and Rivers State Civil Services can collaborate on technology-driven initiatives that can serve as a model for other states and regions".

Mrs Walson-Jack disclosed that the visit to the State has offered her an opportunity to strengthen partnership and explore new avenues for collaboration with a shared commitment to innovation and progress that will positively impact Rivers State and Nigeria.

She expressed appreciation to the governor's public congratulatory message following her appointment as the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation some few weeks back.

Governor Siminalayi Fubara welcomed the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation to the state recounting her as an exemplary ambassador of Rivers State. He stated that his administration inherited a state civil service that has been stagnated over the years as a result of lack of promotion and adequate training for civil servants in the state.

The governor expressed readiness to partner with the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation on accelerating reforms that will reposition the state civil service for the benefit of both the state and the country at large.

Governor Fubara praised Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack for her professional conduct in discharging official duties and engagements. He encouraged her to continue to serve as a role model for the Civil Service.

The governor promised to ensure that equal opportunities are given to the indigenes of Rivers state to enable them compete favourably with their counterparts from other regions, stating that with the support of the HCSF, the past glory of the Rivers State Civil Service will be restored.



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Marching to Greatness: Celebrating HCSF's 100 days in Office



...CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

service into a new era of transformation. She succeeded Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan, another reformist leader, and vowed to build upon her predecessor's successes.

A vision for transformation

Walson-Jack's vision for the civil service is clear: she seeks to create a public sector that is efficient, transparent, technology-driven, and focused on delivering excellent services to the Nigerian people. In her inaugural address, she made it clear that her administration would prioritize the ongoing reforms under the **Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025 (FCSSIP 25)**, with a renewed emphasis on innovation, accountability, and capacity building.

She stated, "I am committed to advancing the ongoing reforms and ensuring the fulfillment of our mandates in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of the current administration." Her reference to President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda was a significant nod to the alignment of her reform strategies with the broader goals of the national government.

From day one, Walson-Jack emphasized the importance of technology in driving efficiency and productivity in the civil service. She called for the full embrace of digitalization, urging public servants to become more tech-savvy, especially as the civil service moves toward computer-based systems for assessments and daily operations. This focus on technology reflects one of the pillars of the FCSSIP 25—**Digitalization and Innovation**—which aims to modernize the civil service and make it more responsive to the needs of citizens.

Key achievements in 100 days

Walson-Jack's first 100 days have been marked by a series of bold initiatives and impactful decisions aimed at laying the groundwork for long-term reforms.

Below are some of the standout achievements during this period:

1. re-introduction of the Civil Service Anthem

One of Walson-Jack's early initiatives was the reintroduction of the civil service anthem, a symbolic move to inspire civil servants and foster a greater sense of unity and purpose within the service. The anthem, which

emphasizes the core values of efficiency, productivity, incorruptibility, and citizen-centered service, is now being sung by civil and public servants across the nation.

"The anthem serves as a reminder of the values we uphold as civil servants," Walson-Jack explained during a meeting with media executives in Abuja. She believes that the lyrics of the anthem will inspire workers to strive for excellence and embrace the spirit of service in their daily tasks.

2. promotion of digitalization

A key highlight of her tenure so far has been her push for digitalization. Walson-Jack has overseen the computerization of promotion and confirmation examinations, ensuring that civil servants are assessed in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner. She personally supervised the Combined Confirmation and Promotion Examination (Compro) conducted across the country, where over 13,000 civil servants took part in a computer-based test (CBT) supervised by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

By making these exams computer-based, Walson-Jack hopes to encourage public servants to take IT and digitalization seriously. Her administration has also facilitated training programs on ICT for workers, ensuring that they are adequately prepared for the digital future of the civil service.

3. collaboration with international partners

Walson-Jack's tenure has also seen a strengthening of international partnerships aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Nigerian civil service. One of the most notable developments has been her engagement with the British government to deepen collaboration on civil service reforms. During a meeting with the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Dr. Richard Montgomery, Walson-Jack emphasized the importance of capacity building, talent management, and knowledge exchange between the two nations.

This collaboration, which includes exchange programs and study tours, is designed to enhance the professional development of Nigerian civil servants and align the service with international best practices. Walson-Jack has also expressed interest in incorporating the UK's Service Live Programme during Nigeria's 2025 Civil Service Week, viewing it as an opportunity for professional growth and capacity building.

4. a people-centered approach

Walson-Jack has demonstrated a deep commitment to the welfare of civil servants. In various town hall meetings, she has reassured workers that their well-being, both physical and mental, will be a top priority of her administration. She has called for a culture of recognition and rewards to motivate staff and improve morale, urging civil servants to embrace innovation and eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Her leadership style, which she describes as consultative and inclusive, has already fostered a sense of belonging among public servants. She has pledged to address issues affecting staff morale and productivity, ensuring that civil servants are motivated and equipped to deliver their best.

Challenges ahead

While Walson-Jack has made remarkable strides in her first 100 days, there are still significant challenges ahead. The civil service faces issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of adequate resources, all of which require sustained efforts and long-term solutions. However, her reform-driven leadership, coupled with her strategic focus on digitalization, capacity building, and accountability, provides a strong foundation for addressing these challenges.

The Road Ahead: A legacy of reform

As Didi Walson-Jack continues her tenure as Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, her vision for a more innovative, efficient, and people-centered civil service is set to redefine governance in Nigeria. Her first 100 days have shown that she is not afraid to make bold decisions and implement reforms that will benefit both public servants and the Nigerian public at large.

Her legacy is shaping up to be one of transformation, where technology, accountability, and ethical leadership become the hallmarks of Nigeria's civil service. As she builds on the reforms laid out by her predecessor and continues to champion innovation, Walson-Jack's leadership promises to steer Nigeria's civil service toward a brighter, more productive future.

In her own words: "The civil service is the backbone of our government, and it is our duty to ensure that it is efficient, transparent, and accountable to the Nigerian people. I am committed to this vision, and together, we will achieve greatness."

The Role of Civil Servants in National Development: A Case Study of Nigeria



Cross Section of Federal Permanent Secretaries, at a Retreat in Niger State.

By: **Kehinde Fajobi**

Civil servants are indispensable to the functioning of governments around the world. They serve as the engine that drives the implementation of policies and programs designed to foster national development.

In Nigeria, where the landscape is defined by complex socio-economic challenges, civil servants play a critical role in facilitating sustainable development, shaping governance, and ensuring the delivery of essential services to citizens. Through the effective functioning of the civil service, government policies can be translated into concrete actions that impact everything from healthcare and education to infrastructure and public security.

The role of Nigerian civil servants in national development cannot be overstated, yet it is also a role fraught with significant challenges. From limited funding to inadequate training, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political interference, civil servants are often tasked with delivering results under difficult circumstances. Still, their influence on the nation's development trajectory is undeniable.

This article examines the role of civil servants in Nigeria's national development and highlights the importance of reforms, motivation, and support to enhance their capacity to deliver.

Historical context of civil service in Nigeria

The civil service in Nigeria has a long history, rooted in the British colonial administration, which established a framework for public administration and governance. Upon Nigeria's independence in 1960, the civil service transitioned from a colonial institution to a national one, charged with the responsibility of implementing policies aimed at achieving national development goals. Over the decades, the Nigerian civil service has played a central role in nation-building by administering public policy, managing resources, and ensuring the stability of governance, regardless of political transitions.

In the post-independence era, Nigeria adopted various national development plans aimed at addressing socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, infrastructure deficits, and public health issues. These plans often relied heavily on the civil service to deliver on the goals set forth. Civil servants were entrusted with policy formulation, execution, and oversight, making them key drivers of national progress.

Despite their critical role, the Nigerian civil service has not been without its challenges.

Over time, it became plagued by issues of inefficiency, corruption, and political patronage. Many of these challenges stemmed from systemic problems such as poor remuneration, lack of meritocracy in promotions, career stagnation, and an absence of succession planning. These issues undermined the effectiveness of the civil service and, by extension, the government's ability to achieve its development objectives.

The civil service as an engine for socio-economic development

The civil service remains at the heart of Nigeria's socio-economic development. It is the mechanism through which government policies are implemented and public services are delivered. Civil servants work across various ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) to oversee critical sectors such as education, health, transportation, and economic planning. Their ability to execute government policies directly affects the quality of life for millions of Nigerians.

One of the key areas in which civil servants contribute to national development is in the implementation of social and economic policies aimed at improving living standards and reducing poverty. Programs such as the National Social Investment Program (NSIP), which includes initiatives like the N-Power program for youth employment and the Conditional Cash Transfer for vulnerable populations, are administered by civil servants. These programs are designed to address some of the most pressing challenges facing Nigeria, including unemployment, poverty, and social inequality.

Similarly, in the area of healthcare, civil servants are instrumental in implementing national health policies such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), aimed at improving access to quality healthcare for all Nigerians. The effective management of public health programs, including vaccination campaigns, maternal and child health initiatives, and the fight against communicable diseases like malaria and tuberculosis, largely depends on the competence and dedication of civil servants in the Ministry of Health and related agencies.

The civil service also plays a critical role in the area of infrastructure development. Large-scale projects such as the construction of roads, bridges, and railways, which are essential for economic growth, require meticulous planning, budgeting, and supervision—tasks that fall under the purview of civil servants in the Ministry of Works, Housing, and Transport. These projects not only improve the country's infrastructure but also create jobs and stimulate

economic activity, further contributing to national development.

In the education sector, civil servants manage the implementation of policies aimed at improving access to quality education, such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program. This program, which seeks to provide free and compulsory basic education to all children of school age, is crucial for developing a skilled and educated workforce, which in turn drives long-term economic growth.

Challenges facing the Nigerian Civil Service

While the role of civil servants in national development is vital, their ability to perform effectively is often hindered by several challenges. One of the most significant challenges is the issue of career stagnation. Many civil servants face limited opportunities for career advancement due to a lack of structured succession planning and a merit-based promotion system. This not only demotivates employees but also results in a loss of talent, as skilled individuals may seek opportunities elsewhere.

Another major challenge is the uniform remuneration system, which fails to account for differences in skill levels, qualifications, and responsibilities. The low pay structure in the civil service often leads to dissatisfaction and lowers morale, which can result in reduced productivity. In addition, inadequate compensation contributes to the persistence of corrupt practices within the service, as some civil servants resort to unethical means to supplement their income.

Moreover, the lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities for civil servants hinders their ability to keep up with the evolving demands of governance in a rapidly changing world. Many civil servants are not adequately trained in modern management practices, ICT, or other skills necessary for efficient service delivery. This skills gap is particularly evident in sectors that require specialized knowledge, such as health, education, and infrastructure development.

The political environment in Nigeria also poses challenges for the civil service. Frequent changes in government, coupled with political interference in the appointments and promotions of civil servants, undermine the stability and professionalism of the service. Civil servants often find themselves caught in the crossfire of political rivalries, which can hinder their ability to perform their duties impartially and effectively.

Recent reforms and efforts to strengthen the civil service

Recognizing the critical role of civil servants in national development, successive Nigerian governments have undertaken various reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. One of the most recent initiatives is the "Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan (FCSSIP) 2021–2025," which seeks to reposition the civil service as a driver of national development by addressing issues such as career stagnation, inadequate training, and poor remuneration.

The FCSSIP emphasizes the need for capacity building through the continuous training of civil servants to improve their skills and knowledge. It also calls for the introduction of modern technology in the civil service to enhance productivity and service delivery. One notable example of this is the ICT for Change Training Programme, a partnership between the Federal Government and Huawei Technologies Nigeria Limited, which has trained thousands of civil servants in information and communication technology (ICT). Such initiatives are designed to ensure that civil servants are equipped with the tools and skills necessary to function effectively in today's digital world.

Another critical reform is the reintroduction of the civil service anthem and the holding of town hall meetings to engage with civil servants and boost their morale. These initiatives, championed by the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Didi Walson-Jack, aim to foster a sense of pride, unity, and purpose among civil servants. By promoting a culture of professionalism, integrity, and service, these efforts seek to motivate civil servants to perform their duties with dedication and a sense of national responsibility.

In addition, there have been efforts to address the remuneration and welfare of civil servants through salary reviews and the provision of employee welfare programs. These programs are intended to improve the living standards of civil servants and reduce the incidence of corruption within the service.

The Way Forward: strengthening the role of civil servants in national development

For Nigeria to achieve its development goals, it is essential to have a well-functioning civil service that is capable of implementing government policies effectively. This requires addressing the challenges that hinder the performance of civil servants and investing in their continuous professional development. By providing civil servants with the training, resources, and motivation they need, the government can ensure that they remain productive and efficient.

It is also important to promote a culture of meritocracy within the civil service. Promotions and appointments should be based on performance and qualifications, rather than political considerations. This will not only improve the morale of civil servants but also attract talented individuals to the service.

Finally, the government must continue to support ongoing reforms aimed at modernizing the civil service and enhancing its capacity to deliver on national development goals. By embracing technology, fostering collaboration with the private sector, and prioritizing the welfare of civil servants, Nigeria can build a civil service that is equipped to drive sustainable development and improve the quality of life for all citizens.

Conclusion

Civil servants are the custodians of Nigeria's development agenda. They are responsible for translating government policies into tangible results that can improve the lives of citizens and stimulate economic growth.

While the civil service in Nigeria faces significant challenges, recent reforms and initiatives provide hope for its transformation into a more efficient, productive, and motivated institution.

By investing in the professional development and welfare of civil servants, Nigeria can ensure that its civil service remains a critical driver of national development for years to come.

Stories By: **Wole Ajetunmobi**

FCSC, CIPM to Partner on Human Resource Management Reforms

In a bold move aimed at transforming Nigeria's civil service, the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) has signaled a promising partnership with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM).

The Chairman of the FCSC, Prof. Tunji Olaopa, revealed this development during a high-level meeting with CIPM President, Mallam Ahmed Ladan Gobir, and other officials recently in Abuja.

Prof. Olaopa emphasized the potential of this collaboration to modernize human resource (HR) management within the civil service, marking a crucial step towards a more efficient and effective workforce. During the meeting, the FCSC Chairman expressed his eagerness to work with the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi

Walson-Jack, to formalize this initiative.

According to him, this partnership will serve as a powerful vehicle to drive the professionalisation of the public sector, a goal he has tirelessly pursued since 1995.

"We need to elevate the standards of HR management in the civil service," Prof. Olaopa said. "The FCSC is committed to ensuring that the public service operates with merit, integrity, and professionalism. This partnership with CIPM will give us the tools and framework needed to achieve that."

Prof. Olaopa highlighted the FCSC's current efforts to reposition the Commission through a new philosophy built on restructuring, professionalization, and integrity-driven HR management. The ultimate goal is to establish the FCSC as a model for transformational HR in Nigeria, focusing on merit-based appointments and performance-driven systems.

The Chairman did, however, issue a word of caution regarding the certification of civil servants as HR professionals. While he acknowledged the importance of

certification, he stressed that this must be paired with substantial skilling and competency development.

"Professionalization is not just about obtaining a certificate. It requires ongoing development, especially in the public sector, where the challenges are unique and complex," Olaopa added.

During the meeting, Prof. Olaopa also touched on the deep-rooted structural issues that continue to hinder the growth and performance of Nigeria's civil service. Among these are career stagnation, the absence of a robust

succession management plan, and an outdated, uniform remuneration system. These factors, he said, have prevented the civil service from fully institutionalizing merit-based performance management, leading to inefficiencies and a demotivated workforce.

The collaboration between the FCSC and CIPM is expected to address these challenges head-on. By focusing on human capital development and adopting modern HR practices, the partnership aims to break the stagnation and breathe new life into the civil service.

Mallam Ahmed Ladan Gobir, President of the CIPM, lauded Prof. Olaopa for his visionary leadership and the strides the FCSC is making towards ensuring a dynamic and responsive civil service. He also expressed the institute's commitment to supporting the Commission's efforts to enhance HR practices within the public sector.

Gobir praised Prof. Olaopa's dedication as a leader, teacher, and mentor, acknowledging his pivotal role in reshaping HR management within the civil service. He also invited the FCSC Chairman to the institute's international conference and exhibition, which is set to take place in Abuja on October 12, 2024. The event, Gobir noted, will provide an excellent platform to further discuss collaborative opportunities between the FCSC and CIPM.

The partnership between the FCSC and CIPM represents a significant leap forward in the ongoing reform agenda aimed at revitalising Nigeria's public service. By professionalising HR management, both institutions seek to equip civil servants with the skills, competencies, and motivation needed to excel in today's rapidly changing

environment.

With Prof. Olaopa at the helm of the FCSC, backed by the expertise of the CIPM, this initiative has the potential to address many of the systemic issues that have plagued Nigeria's civil service for decades. From career stagnation to the lack of succession management, the reforms will focus on creating a merit-based, performance-oriented system that encourages accountability and excellence.

Moreover, the emphasis on certification and competency development will ensure that HR professionals within the public sector are not only well-trained but also well-equipped to handle the unique challenges that come with managing the nation's workforce. This collaboration promises to modernize HR practices, enhance civil service productivity, and improve service delivery to Nigerian citizens.

As Nigeria continues to grapple with economic and social challenges, the civil service remains a critical institution for governance and national development. The reforms spearheaded by the FCSC and CIPM, if successfully implemented, could transform the civil service into a dynamic, innovative, and citizen-centered workforce.

The modernisation of HR practices is not just about improving administrative processes; it's about ensuring that civil servants are motivated, skilled, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to national progress. This new partnership marks a significant step in the right direction, laying the groundwork for a civil service that can adapt to the demands of a 21st-century Nigeria.

With the support of key stakeholders like the CIPM, the FCSC is poised to lead this transformation, ensuring that Nigeria's civil service emerges stronger, more efficient, and better equipped to serve its people. As the partnership unfolds, civil servants and the general public alike will be watching closely, hopeful that this collaboration will indeed bring about the much-needed change in the nation's public sector.

The partnership between the Federal Civil Service Commission and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management is a positive step to a transformative journey for Nigeria's civil service. Under the visionary leadership of Prof. Tunji Olaopa, and with the support of CIPM, this initiative aims to modernize HR management practices, professionalize the public sector, and create a performance-driven, merit-based civil service that upholds the values of integrity, accountability, and efficiency.

As Nigeria faces the challenges of the future, the civil service must be well-prepared to lead the way. This collaboration represents a critical step in ensuring that the public sector is ready to meet the demands of a changing world, positioning Nigeria for greater success on the global stage.



The HCSF, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni in a group photograph with the management team of Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM), led by their President and Chairman of the Governing Council, Mallam Ahmed Ladan Gobir, FCIPM, during the courtesy visit to the HCSF office in Abuja.

FG, Huawei Partner to Boost Civil Service ICT Skills

In a major push towards modernizing Nigeria's public service, 100 senior-level federal civil servants have been equipped with advanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills through the Federal Government's "ICT for Change" training programme, in partnership with Huawei Technologies Nigeria Limited.

The training is part of a broader initiative to enhance the capacity of civil servants and improve service delivery across the nation's Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs).

At the closing ceremony of the fourth phase of the training, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Sen. George Akume, represented by Dr. Nnamdi Mbaeri, Permanent Secretary of the General Services Office, applauded Huawei's efforts in developing the ICT capacity of over 3,000 civil servants since the partnership began. During the event, the SGF presented awards to 16 outstanding participants from this phase, acknowledging their exceptional performance.

Addressing the participants, Dr. Mbaeri emphasized that ICT training for civil servants is crucial

to the success of the Federal Government's "Renewed Hope" agenda, spearheaded by President Bola Tinubu's administration. According to him, the programme is designed to boost the capacity of civil servants to use technology more effectively, which will lead to enhanced service delivery for Nigerians.

"The training will not only improve the performance of individual civil servants but also drive a significant transformation in our civil service as a whole. This is in line with our administration's objectives of leveraging technology to deliver better public services," he stated.

Dr. Mbaeri also called on Huawei to sustain the programme and expand it to other key sectors that could benefit from ICT knowledge. Furthermore, he urged other development partners to support the government's initiatives aimed at uplifting the socio-economic conditions of Nigerians. Speaking during the event, Stephen Zou, Deputy Managing Director of Huawei Technologies, reaffirmed the organization's dedication to supporting Nigeria's public service by continually improving the ICT capabilities of civil

servants. He noted that Huawei has now trained over 3,000 federal civil servants since the inception of the programme and expressed optimism about the future of the partnership.

"This phase is another step in a long journey of collaboration between Huawei and the Federal Government. We are proud to be part of this effort to modernize Nigeria's civil service through ICT," Zou said. He underscored that ICT is not just a tool for efficiency but a catalyst for innovation in governance.

The programme also celebrated individual excellence, with 16 outstanding participants being recognized for their exceptional performance. Among them was Engr. Dr. Patrick Oghuma, who was awarded second prize in Batch 2 of the training. Dr. Oghuma is currently the Deputy Head and Team Lead (Technical and Administrative) for Project Delivery, Monitoring and Evaluation (PROD-ME), as well as Special Assistant to the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Technology.

In his vote of thanks, Mr. Francis Wasa, Director of ICT, expressed his appreciation to the Office of the SGF for its continued

support and to Huawei for its commitment to civil service development. He also congratulated the awardees for excelling in their training and encouraged other civil servants to take advantage of such capacity-building opportunities.

On behalf of the awardees, Adebayo Adeyemi, Director of ICT at the Federal Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation, expressed his gratitude to both Huawei and the Federal Government. He highlighted how the training has broadened participants' understanding of e-governance and enhanced their ability to apply ICT to improve public service delivery.

As the world becomes increasingly digital, the ability of civil servants to navigate and leverage ICT has become more critical than ever. The "ICT for Change" programme is part of the Federal Government's broader agenda to modernize the Nigerian civil service, ensuring that it is not only efficient but also future-oriented. By building the ICT capacity of civil servants, the government is positioning the public sector to play a pivotal role in driving national development,

fostering innovation, and improving governance. The collaboration between the Federal Government and Huawei is a clear demonstration of how public-private partnerships can be leveraged to achieve these goals.

As the programme continues, more civil servants will be trained, and more key sectors are likely to benefit from this initiative. With the support of partners like Huawei and other development agencies, Nigeria's civil service is on track to becoming a more technologically-savvy and responsive institution, capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly changing world.

The partnership between the Federal Government and Huawei Technologies Nigeria Limited under the "ICT for Change" programme represents a significant step towards the transformation of Nigeria's civil service. Through this initiative, the government is not only improving the ICT capacity of its civil servants but also laying the groundwork for a more efficient, innovative, and future-ready public service.

Stories By: Janet Adeyemi

The recent meeting of the National Council on Establishments (NCE), held in Ede, Osun State, underscored the pivotal role of the civil service in Nigeria's socio-economic development. Here are the highlights:

1. Significance of the NCE in Policy Implementation

The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, described the NCE as a vital mechanism for effective governance and policy execution. She emphasized its alignment with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and its importance in enhancing the civil service's ability to deliver on national goals.

2. Commitment to Reforms and Collaboration

Mrs. Walson-Jack reaffirmed her office's dedication to supporting state Heads of Service through capacity-building initiatives and collaborative reforms. She stressed unity among public sector stakeholders as critical to the success of ongoing reforms aimed at evolving a more efficient civil service.

3. Governor Adeleke's Advocacy for Public Service

Osun State Governor Ademola Adeleke, represented by Deputy Governor Prince Kola Adewusi, highlighted the public service's role as the engine of his administration's progress. He prioritized worker and pensioner welfare and called for policy deliberations to advance national development.

4. Policy Advancements

The council deliberated on 32 memoranda and approved significant reforms, including:

- Expanding entry requirements for select cadres.
- Adopting modern technology and digitalizing administrative processes, including COMPRO examinations.
- Extending Occupational Hazard Allowance to agricultural professionals.
- Comprehensive review of service schemes to reflect recent approvals.

5. Endorsement of AMPLE Values

The council reaffirmed the importance of the AMPLE values—Accountability, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Leadership, and Excellence—in restoring public confidence in the civil service.

6. Commendations and Contributions

Stakeholders praised the dynamic leadership of Mrs. Walson-Jack and acknowledged the collaboration between federal and state offices. The Permanent Secretary, Service Policies and Strategy Office, Dr. Deborah Odoh, appreciated the collective efforts to strengthen the public service.

7. Technology-Driven Reforms

The meeting reinforced the adoption of innovation and technology as crucial to enhancing service delivery and ensuring a responsive and modern civil service. The event highlighted the NCE's commitment to driving impactful reforms, fostering intergovernmental collaboration, and enhancing the effectiveness of Nigeria's public service for national development.

Seven Key Takeaways from NCE Meeting in Osun



Osun State Deputy Governor, Prince Kola Adewusi, and the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni, during the National Council on Establishments (NCE) meeting in Ede, Osun State.

Delivering Results: Walson-Jack Leads Successful Salary Adjustment Negotiations in First 100 Days

As part of her early strides in office, the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, successfully saw the conclusion of consequential salary adjustment negotiations arising from the 2024 Minimum Wage Act.

This milestone represents a key achievement in her first 100 days, underscoring her commitment to fostering harmony and efficiency within the civil service.

The committee, chaired by Mrs. Walson-Jack, was tasked with determining salary adjustments following the implementation of the new minimum wage of ₦70,000. The assignment, completed with remarkable speed and consensus, culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by representatives from both the Trade Union and Government sides.

Speaking at the MoU signing ceremony, Mrs. Walson-Jack commended the committee for their dedication and professionalism throughout

the negotiations.

"This exercise has been one of the shortest and most peaceful negotiations we have witnessed. Both sides worked diligently to reach a fair agreement, reflecting our shared commitment to the welfare of civil servants," she noted.

Highlighting the cooperative spirit, she added, "Both the Trade Union and the Government sides have agreed on the

consequential adjustments in salaries, and the signed MoU signifies the successful conclusion of our deliberations. Copies of the MoU will now be submitted to the Federal Government for further action."

The National Chairman of the Joint Negotiating Council, Comrade Benjamin Anthony, who represented the Trade Union, expressed satisfaction with the outcome,

praising the HCSF's leadership. "Mrs. Walson-Jack has been exemplary in her role as Chair of this committee. Her ability to guide discussions with fairness and professionalism has ensured that the interests of workers and the government were equally considered," he remarked.

The swift and amicable resolution of this sensitive issue reflects the HCSF's

commitment to fostering a collaborative environment within the civil service. It also underscores her focus on delivering results and strengthening trust between government institutions and their workforce.

This achievement adds to the growing list of initiatives spearheaded by Mrs. Walson-Jack, positioning her tenure as a transformative chapter for Nigeria's civil service.

HCSF Unveils Online Portal for Govt Circulars

In a major step toward enhancing transparency and efficiency in the civil service, the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, has launched an online portal to provide easy access to government circulars.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony held in Abuja on Wednesday, November 22, Walson-Jack emphasized the pivotal role circulars play in governance and administration.

"Circulars provide direction, clarify policies, and ensure consistent communication of

decisions across the Service," she said. "However, accessibility and retention of these critical documents have been recurring challenges, often disrupting institutional memory and hindering seamless service delivery."

The newly launched portal, which serves as a compendium of Civil and Public Service Circulars, aims to address these challenges. According to Walson-Jack, the initiative will streamline access to vital information, reduce administrative bottlenecks, and improve service delivery.

"This online compendium of circulars will enhance the civil service's efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness," she noted. "It supports our goals of creating a more responsive service, advancing accountability, and fostering excellence in governance."

Highlighting the significance of the innovation, Walson-Jack described the project as a reflection of the administration's commitment to modernizing governance processes.

"This compendium is more than a technological upgrade; it is a declaration of our

determination to adapt, innovate, and lead," she said. "It demonstrates our belief that a modern Civil Service is not just about what we do but how we do it, underscoring our commitment to transparency, accountability, and excellence."

The launch of the portal marks a key milestone in the administration's drive to enhance the operational framework of the civil service, ensuring that it evolves to meet the demands of a dynamic governance landscape.



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National Council on Establishments: A Pillar for Nigeria's Socio-Economic Growth – Walson-Jack

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accountability, and professionalism within the civil service would further strengthen the country's governance structures.

"A reformed, modernized civil service is essential to the success of any government. I commend the efforts being made to ensure the service meets the demands of modern governance," Fasuyi said.

Key decisions from the NCE meeting

The NCE meeting, presided over by Walson-Jack and attended by the Heads of Service from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, featured several important discussions. During the technical session of the meeting, Permanent Secretaries of Establishments from across the federation discussed issues ranging from modernizing civil service processes to adopting technological innovations to improve efficiency.

In a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, members underscored the importance of collaboration between the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation and State Heads of Service. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment to the AMPLE values—Accountability, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Leadership, and Efficiency—designed to rebuild public confidence in the civil service.

The NCE considered 32 memoranda on various establishment matters and approved several reforms aimed at improving the civil service. These included the expansion of entry requirements for selected cadres, the adoption of modern technology in administrative processes, and the digitalization of the COMPRO (Compulsory Professional Examination) examinations within the service.

Additionally, the Council approved the extension of Occupational Hazard

Allowance to some agricultural professionals in the public service, and a comprehensive review of the Schemes of Service to reflect recent Council approvals. Walson-Jack described these reforms as essential steps in modernizing the civil service and ensuring that it remains responsive to the evolving needs of Nigerians.

"We are committed to adopting best practices in public service management to enhance service delivery and ensure that the civil service can support the government's agenda for national development," she said.

Appreciation for collaborative efforts

In her vote of thanks, Dr. Deborah O.N. Odoh, Permanent Secretary, Service Policies and Strategy Office, in the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, commended Walson-Jack for her dynamic leadership. She also praised the Heads of Service from across the states for their commitment to driving reforms in their jurisdictions.

"I thank the government and people of Osun State for their warm hospitality. I also express gratitude to the HCSF for her dynamic leadership and to all the State Heads of Service for their contributions toward creating a stronger and more efficient civil service," Dr. Odoh said. The NCE meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to reforming Nigeria's civil service, ensuring it remains the backbone of government operations and capable of delivering on the promises of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

As Walson-Jack continues to spearhead these reforms, the civil service is expected to emerge as a more dynamic and efficient institution, playing a vital role in Nigeria's national development.



(R-L): Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni welcoming the former with a handshake to the 2024 World Teachers' Day Commemoration and President's Teachers and Schools Excellence Award Ceremony held at the Eagles Square, Abuja on Saturday, 5th October, 2024.

Walson-Jack Celebrates Teachers, Reaffirms Commitment to Reforms in Civil Service

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recently used the occasion World Teachers' Day to honor the pivotal role teachers play in shaping the future of the nation.

Delivering her goodwill message at the 2024 World Teachers' Day Commemoration and President's Teachers and Schools Excellence Award Ceremony in Abuja, Walson-Jack praised Nigerian teachers for their dedication and hard work. She acknowledged them as the "bedrock upon which a prosperous and progressive society is built" and underscored the importance of their contribution to the country's future.

She highlighted the importance of educators in building a prosperous society and emphasized the government's commitment to reforms aimed at improving public service efficiency.

The theme of this year's event, "Valuing Teachers' Voices: Towards a New Social Contract

for Education," resonated with Walson-Jack's ongoing reform efforts in the civil service. She noted that improving education is integral to her broader agenda of enhancing service delivery across public institutions.

"Teachers are not only educators, but nation builders," she said. "When teachers are appreciated and acknowledged for their hard work, creativity, and commitment, they are empowered to continue shaping lives with passion and innovation. Their voices must be valued, as they hold the key to the future of our country."

Celebrating excellence in education

Walson-Jack also commended the integration of the President's Teachers and Schools Excellence Award into the World Teachers' Day event, describing the initiative as "a fitting recognition of the exceptional efforts of teachers, administrators, and schools nationwide." She lauded the award as a powerful motivator for educators to strive for excellence.

"Rewarding excellence in teaching inspires educators to go beyond the ordinary and sets benchmarks for success," she said. "It also demonstrates the immense value we place on education as a nation."

In her address, Walson-Jack called on both public and private sector organizations to sustain the recognition of outstanding contributions in education through the creation of more awards at local, state, and national levels.

"Such awards should highlight innovative methods, impactful mentoring, and excellence in the teaching profession. Let us continue to honor, reward, and invest in our teachers, for in their hands lies the future of our great nation," she added.

Reforms and teachers' role in national development

Walson-Jack used the occasion to tie the significance of education into her broader reform agenda for the civil service. She emphasized that her office is

committed to creating a more efficient and responsive public service, with education and capacity building as central pillars of her strategy.

She noted that improving the working conditions of civil servants, including teachers, is crucial to achieving the objectives of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

"As part of our ongoing reforms in the civil service, we are focused on enhancing collaboration and partnerships that support capacity building for all public servants, including our teachers," she said.

"The civil service must evolve to meet the current expectations of Nigerians, and the education sector is a key area where we must lead by example."

Federal government's commitment to teachers

In his remarks at the event, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, represented by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, reiterated the government's commitment to improving teachers' welfare.

Acknowledging the challenges educators face in fulfilling their roles, he reassured the nation's teachers that the administration would take all necessary steps to address their concerns.

"We understand the sacrifices our teachers make, and we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that their welfare and the quality of education in Nigeria are achieved," Senator Akume stated, adding that education remains a top priority for the Tinubu administration.

Awards for best teachers and schools

One of the highlights of the ceremony was the presentation of the Presidential Awards, which included car gifts to the best-performing teachers, administrators, and schools across various categories. The awards were given in recognition of their outstanding contributions to education and their efforts in improving the

learning experiences of Nigerian children.

Dignitaries at the event included the Governors of Kano, Kebbi, Borno, Oyo, Benue, and Enugu States, who also received awards from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) for their immense contributions to education and the well-being of teachers in their respective states. The presence of these leaders underscored the national importance of education and the collaborative efforts required to drive progress in the sector.

Moving forward

In her closing remarks, Walson-Jack urged stakeholders to ensure that the recognition of teachers goes beyond World Teachers' Day and becomes a year-round priority. She emphasized that supporting educators with tangible incentives and opportunities for professional development is crucial to equipping them for the evolving challenges of modern education.

"Recognition and awards should be accompanied by meaningful incentives, and opportunities for professional growth must be provided so that our teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of today's dynamic classroom environment," she said. As Nigeria moves forward with Walson-Jack's civil service reforms, education remains a central focus, and teachers are recognized as key drivers of national development. The Head of Service reaffirmed that with sustained effort, collaboration, and a commitment to excellence, the Nigerian civil service will continue to improve its service delivery to meet the aspirations of its people. This year's World Teachers' Day celebration was not only a tribute to the country's educators but also a reminder of the ongoing reforms led by Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack to uplift the public service.

As teachers were honored for their invaluable contributions, the event underscored the importance of continuous improvement in education as a foundation for a prosperous Nigeria.

Reform Drive: HCSF Inaugurates War Rooms to Fast-Track FCSSIP-25 Implementation

In a bold move to accelerate the transformation of Nigeria's civil service, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), inaugurated War Rooms for the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025 (FCSSIP-25) on Thursday, September 19, 2024. The initiative underscores her commitment to delivering results-driven reforms before the plan's expiration in December 2025.

Speaking at the inauguration event in Abuja, Mrs. Walson-Jack described the War Rooms as "strategy and solution centres" designed to focus urgent attention on the six pillars and enablers of FCSSIP-25. These include improving staff competencies, boosting productivity, promoting performance-based and meritocratic environments, enhancing HR administration, and fostering digital transformation across the civil service.

"As we move towards the expiration of FCSSIP-25 by December 2025, it is extremely important for us to accelerate the implementation of the reform initiatives to ensure the achievement of the set targets," Walson-Jack stated. "Our War Rooms allude to the speed we want to bring to bear in accelerating the implementation of FCSSIP-25."

A new approach to reform

The War Rooms are more than just physical spaces; they represent a strategic shift. They are structured to ensure that each pillar of the plan receives focused and coordinated attention. Permanent Secretaries will lead the teams tasked with tracking progress, identifying bottlenecks, and proposing critical interventions to meet key performance indicators established during the September 2024 retreat of the HCSF with permanent secretaries.

Mrs. Walson-Jack explained that

the War Rooms are inspired by the term's definition: "a room where strategic decisions are made." She added, "This initiative underscores the urgency we attach to the implementation of these reforms. It is about adopting timely, accurate, and well-coordinated actions to achieve our vision of a world-class civil service that contributes effectively to national development."

Broad support for the initiative

In her remarks, the Permanent Secretary, Service Policies and Strategies Office (SPSO), Dr. Deborah Bako Odoh, lauded the War Rooms as a critical tool for accelerating FCSSIP-25's implementation.

"This robust strategy aligns perfectly with the vision for a world-class civil service," she said. "As we approach the culmination of FCSSIP-25, the establishment of

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PMS Champions during their inaugural meeting with the Permanent Secretary, CSO, Mr Raymond Omachi, in the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

FG Cracks Down on Irregular Civil Service Promotions, Reinforces Due Process

By: **Wole Ajetumobi**

The Federal Government has issued a stern warning to ministries and agencies conducting promotion exercises for special civil servants without adhering to the required procedures.

In a memo signed by the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, and addressed to top government officials, ministries were advised to follow established guidelines for promotions to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability.

The memo, dated October 28, 2024, and sighted by our correspondent, highlights concern about ministries bypassing the due process in recommending officers for special promotions. It was addressed to the Chief of Staff to the President, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Ministers, Heads of Departments, and several key agencies, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

Walson-Jack emphasized the need to follow the extant rules as outlined in Part IV Section 24 of the "Guidelines for Appointments, Promotion and Discipline" (2004 Edition), issued by the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC).

The memo stressed that only through strict compliance with these rules can the integrity of the civil service promotion process be maintained.

Walson-Jack's Memo on special promotions

In the memo, Walson-Jack expressed concern over ministries requesting special promotions for deserving officers without following the appropriate procedure. She noted, "It has been observed that ministries are making requests for special promotion of officers from one salary grade level to the other, without observing due process."

The memo advised all Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments to adhere to the guidelines laid out by the Federal Civil Service

Commission (FCSC). The process involves forwarding all requests for special promotions to the FCSC through the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, and the recommendation must come from the concerned Permanent Secretary.

"For the avoidance of doubt, all requests for special promotion must be forwarded to the Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission by the recommending Permanent Secretary, through the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation," Walson-Jack instructed.

The HCSF urged ministries and departments to ensure strict compliance with the circular's contents, stating, "Kindly ensure strict compliance with the content of this Circular."

This directive seeks to maintain order and fairness within the civil service promotion framework, ensuring that special promotions are merit-based and follow the proper channels.

Implications for Walson-Jack's civil service reform agenda

This warning is in line with Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack's broader civil service reform drive, which aims to restore discipline, meritocracy, and transparency in the management of Nigeria's public service. Her focus on adherence to guidelines and due process underscores her commitment to fostering a civil service that is efficient, accountable, and free from irregularities.

By reinforcing the importance of following the correct procedures in promotion exercises, Walson-Jack is sending a clear message that favoritism or shortcuts in promotions will not be tolerated. The memo reflects her administration's broader goals of ensuring that the civil service operates under clear, merit-based systems that uphold the values of fairness and integrity.

The move is also significant within the context of her efforts to professionalize the civil service and

equip it with the necessary skills and leadership to effectively implement government policies. Ensuring that promotions are based on merit and follow proper procedures will improve the overall quality and morale of civil servants, contributing to a more effective public administration.

The role of the FCSC

The Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) plays a pivotal role in overseeing appointments, promotions, and disciplinary actions within the Nigerian civil service. According to the guidelines cited in Walson-Jack's memo, special promotions must go through the FCSC to ensure that the process is transparent and follows established rules.

By directing ministries to submit all promotion requests through the Office of the HCSF to the FCSC, Walson-Jack aims to prevent irregularities in the promotion process and ensure that promotions are granted based on performance, qualifications, and adherence to civil service guidelines.

Overall, the Federal Government's warning to ministries on conducting special promotions without due process is a critical reminder of the importance of following established rules in civil service management.

Under the leadership of Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, the Nigerian civil service is undergoing reforms aimed at ensuring transparency, meritocracy, and professionalism.

By insisting that all special promotion requests go through the appropriate channels and follow the FCSC guidelines, Walson-Jack is reinforcing her commitment to upholding the integrity of the civil service and ensuring that promotions are granted based on merit and performance, not favoritism. This directive is a crucial step in her ongoing efforts to reform and modernize the civil service in line with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

A Vision for Excellence

As Mrs. Walson-Jack emphasized, the inauguration of the War Rooms marks a pivotal moment in her reform drive, reinforcing her commitment to building a motivated, innovative, and digitally transformed civil service. Her focus on meritocracy, accountability, and the adoption of cutting-edge practices reflects a determined push to create a civil service that not only meets but exceeds expectations.

With just over a year left to achieve the ambitious goals of FCSSIP-25, the War Rooms represent a strategic and results-oriented approach to delivering impactful reforms that will resonate well beyond 2025.

FAQs About the Nigerian Civil Service

1. How many years can a civil servant work in Nigeria?

Civil servants in Nigeria are mandated to retire at 60 years of age or after 35 years of service, whichever comes first. However, there are different retirement ages for certain professions, such as 70 years for professors in academia and 65–70 years for judges, depending on their roles.

2. Who is the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation?

Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni, currently serves as the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation. She was first appointed as Permanent Secretary in 2017 by former President Muhammadu Buhari and continues her leadership under President Bola Tinubu.

3. What are the key characteristics of the Nigerian civil service?

The Nigerian civil service is defined by four key characteristics:

- Permanence: Civil servants continue in their roles regardless of changes in government.
- Neutrality: Civil servants are expected to be politically neutral.
- Impartiality: They are to act fairly without bias in their duties.
- Technical Know-How: Civil servants are selected based on professional knowledge and competence.

4. What is the retirement age in the civil service?

The general retirement age is 60 years or after 35 years of service. However, discussions have been ongoing about extending the retirement age to 65 years or 40 years of service, depending on certain conditions.

5. What is the highest level of civil service in Nigeria?

The highest grade levels in the Nigerian civil service are Grade Levels 15 to 17, which senior management officers can attain. This is the most senior tier a civil servant can achieve during their career.

6. What is the difference between civil service and public service?

The civil service refers to employees working in government ministries and departments, while public service includes a broader range of roles, such as firefighters, police officers, and other public sector workers who serve the community.

7. What is misconduct in the civil service?

Misconduct in the civil service refers to any act of wrongdoing or improper behavior that undermines the image of the service and may lead to disciplinary actions.

8. What is the new civil service rule in Nigeria?

The revised Public Service Rules (PSR) were launched on July 28, 2023. One significant change is the introduction of a tenure policy for permanent secretaries, limiting their time in office to four years, with the possibility of renewal based on performance.

9. What are the functions of the civil service?

The civil service is primarily responsible for advising political leaders, implementing government policies, and ensuring the continuity of government administration regardless of changes in political leadership.

10. How long do you get a civil service pension for?

Civil service pensions are payable for life. Once a civil servant retires, their pension is guaranteed for the rest of their life and is unaffected by changes in marital status or entering into a civil partnership.

11. What is the lowest grade level in the civil service?

The lowest entry level in the Nigerian civil service is Grade Level 1. However, the entry level for most graduate positions starts at Grade Level 8.

12. How many types of retirement exist in the civil service?

There are three main types of retirement in the Nigerian civil service:

- Voluntary Retirement: Choosing to retire before the mandatory age or service years.
- Compulsory Retirement: Retirement mandated by the government.
- Health Grounds Retirement: Retiring due to medical incapacity.

13. What is the role of a Permanent Secretary in Nigeria?

A Permanent Secretary is a senior civil servant responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of a government ministry or department. They are career civil servants and not political appointees, ensuring continuity and stability in the functioning of government services.

14. How is promotion handled in the Nigerian Civil Service?

Promotion in the Nigerian Civil Service is typically based on merit, seniority, and performance. Civil servants undergo regular evaluations, and promotions are granted every 2–4 years, depending on their grades and the availability of vacancies.

15. What is the entry requirement for Nigerian civil service jobs?

To join the Nigerian Civil Service, candidates must have a minimum of a secondary school certificate. However, most civil service positions, particularly at higher levels, require a university degree or its equivalent.

16. What is the tenure policy for Permanent Secretaries in Nigeria?

As per the new Public Service Rules (PSR) introduced in 2023, Permanent Secretaries are required to serve a four-year tenure, which may be renewed for another four years based on performance.

17. What is the process for disciplining civil servants in Nigeria?

The disciplinary process in the Nigerian Civil Service is guided by the Public Service Rules (PSR). If a civil servant is found guilty of misconduct, they can face penalties, including suspension, demotion, or dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense.

18. Are civil servants allowed to engage in private business?

Civil servants in Nigeria are not allowed to engage in any form of private business that conflicts with their official duties. The Public Service Rules prohibit civil servants from participating in businesses or roles that may lead to conflicts of interest.

19. What is the Federal Character Principle in Nigerian civil service recruitment?

The Federal Character Principle is a policy aimed at ensuring fair representation of all ethnic groups in federal appointments, including the civil service. Recruitment is designed to reflect the diverse composition of Nigeria's population, promoting national integration.

20. What types of leave are available to civil servants in Nigeria?

Nigerian civil servants are entitled to various types of leave, including annual leave, maternity leave, sick leave, and study leave. The duration and conditions for each type of leave are specified in the Public Service Rules (PSR).

Reform Drive: HCSF Inaugurates War Rooms...

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

these War Rooms demonstrates our readiness to embrace transformative measures."

Director of Civil Service Transformation, Mr. Mohammed Gaji, echoed this sentiment in his vote of thanks, praising Mrs. Walson-Jack for her visionary leadership and the dedication of all stakeholders.

"This initiative is a testament to the unwavering commitment to repositioning the civil service for greater efficiency and effectiveness," he remarked.

Setting clear objectives

The War Rooms have specific terms of reference, including:

1. Assessing the current status of progress towards the 2025 targets.
2. Adopting revised Key

Performance Indicators agreed upon during the September 2024 retreat.

3. Identifying critical interventions necessary to fast-track reforms.

4. Mobilizing required resources to achieve set goals.

Distinguished attendance

The event was graced by top government officials and development partners, including the Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission, Professor Tunji Olaopa; Accountant-General of the Federation, Dr. (Mrs.) Oluwatoyin Madein; Auditor-General of the Federation, Shaakaa Chira; and several Permanent Secretaries.



Courtesy Visit to the Head of the Civil Service by officials of the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation

Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation: Providing Uncommon Intervention for Nigeria's Civil Service

By: **Allen Idiba-Harry**

The Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation has been outstanding in its niche focus of working with relevant government institutions to reposition the Nigerian Civil Service. This it has done in many ways, including holding

periodic trainings for civil servants in order to build their capacity and equip them with prerequisite skills set to navigate the intricate dynamics of the bureaucracy.

Realizing the importance of their role as the engine room of government, and being the foot soldiers responsible for the overall attainment of the nation's public utility, the foundation has invested so much in them since it was established.

The brains behind the noble foundation, Aigboje and Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, were obviously worried about the dwindling fortunes of the service, especially the performance metrics of civil servants, and general sectoral decline of project and programme outcomes. This wasn't the case many years ago while they were growing up. So, reversing that decline became a personal priority for them.

So far, a reported N1 billion has been spent on supporting various initiatives to reform the civil service. The whole essence is to ensure better service delivery as well as optimize the core goals and objectives of the service for the benefit of Nigerians.

Every year, about 100 promising mid-level civil servants undergo rigorous training, which includes an 8-week internship in private sector organisations. The latest of the training took place in October 2024. The worthy initiative is to expose the beneficiaries to modern trends that are essential for them in management, ethics, and other best practices in their career.

The specialized training tagged "Leadership Enhancement and Development Programme" (LEAD-P) is

specifically designed for civil servants at Salary Grade Levels 10-14, and the success story has been overwhelming.

According to the Director of Programmes of the foundation, Chioma Njoku, the internship is a crucial component of the training as it provides the participants a robust insight into efficient and timely work processes, organisational values, ethics, and innovative management styles.

"We are committed to the ideals of an improved and effective civil service that will not only be productive but meet the expectations of Nigerians. It is for this reason that our capacity building trainings are all encompassing, including practical internship programmes", she said.

The foundation's Public-Private Partnership with the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS), has opened another vista of opportunity for civil servants. The collaboration goes beyond skills training. It is aimed at empowering directors in the Federal Civil Service to become transformative leaders, equipped with sharp leadership strategies, masterful communication skills, and expert project management skills.

To this end, it recently concluded an intensive four-week leadership and project management training programme for 61 Directors from 10 Ministries. The training, which was hosted at the office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), equipped participants with essential skills to enhance their leadership capabilities and project management expertise.

Authorities of the foundation believe strongly that by "empowering our civil service leaders, we are building a more effective, efficient, and impactful public sector." In addition, they asserted that "by investing in their leadership development, we are empowering them to become catalysts for transformation in the public sector."

The foundation's shared goal of

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...the foundation has elected to offer the new Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack. The chairman of the foundation, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, during a courtesy call after her appointment, reaffirmed the foundation's steadfast commitment to driving transformative change within the public sector.

improving the lives of civil servants has no doubt provided a new lease of life for Nigeria's civil service. The transformation and profound rebirth are very visible. It has helped to contribute to the economic development of the country.

A major achievement of the foundation so far is its digitisation programme. The programme has helped the work of the over 1,000 civil servants in the OHCSF, and by extension, the work of other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as they no longer take physical files to the OHCSF but electronically mail them in a seamless and real time process.

The deliberate efforts of the foundation to turn things around in the service has really not gone unnoticed. To show the sincere gratitude of his government, President Bola Tinubu in June sent a thank you letter to the foundation for its contributions to the development of the civil service.

The immediate past Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan, at an event, recounted how the foundation helped her overcome the challenges she had faced in the passage of her budget after she was appointed in 2019. She noted that it was the help and intervention of the foundation that she was able to have a seamless time in office, particularly her first year.

Interestingly, it is the same support that the foundation has elected to offer the new Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack. The chairman of the foundation, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, during a courtesy call after her appointment, reaffirmed the foundation's steadfast commitment to driving transformative change within the public sector.

As changed agents, the foundation is not resting on its oars as insisted by its Executive Vice Chairman, Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, that so much still needs to be done, adding that "Our long-term goal is improved efficiency in the civil service both at the federal and sub-national levels."



PMS Champions pose for a group photograph during their inaugural meeting with the Permanent Secretary, CSO, Mr Raymond Omachi, in the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

Ambassador Gabriel Aduda Urges PMS Champions to Lead in Service Delivery

Stories By: **Gift Markson**

Ambassador Gabriel Aduda, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, has called on the Ministry's Performance Management System (PMS) Champions to demonstrate unwavering commitment and excellence in driving service delivery and achieving set targets in line with the ministry's mandate towards

fulfilling the renewed hope agenda.

Speaking today at his office in Abuja during an address to the newly established PMS Core Team, Ambassador Aduda stressed the importance of a thorough understanding of the government's expectations from the programme. He emphasized that the champions, drawn from various departments within

the Ministry, must understand the core provisions and pillars of the FCSCIP 2025. They must lead by example and work diligently to ensure that the PMS is effectively implemented across all levels in the ministry.

"A lot is expected of you," he said, "You must fully grasp the values, pillars and provisions of the FCSCIP 2025 and the intricacies of the

system to lead the Ministry in the full implementation of all facets of performance management and its successful implementation"

Ambassador Aduda further encouraged the PMS Champions to be resilient in overcoming the initial challenges that may arise with the programme's rollout. He expressed confidence that, once the system is fully understood and integrated,

every staff member would become a knowledgeable ambassador for the Ministry's operations.

The Permanent Secretary also highlighted the rewards of dedication and hard work. Drawing from his experience in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Petroleum Resources, Ambassador Aduda shared that he facilitated scholarship opportunities for high-

performing staff, a practice he assured would be replicated in the Ministry of Women Affairs based on merit.

The PMS Champions are expected to lead the charge towards ensuring efficiency, productivity, and accountability across the Ministry, with the ultimate goal of achieving total compliance with government performance standards.

HCSF Commends President Tinubu on Appointment of Senior Special Assistant on Civil Service Matters

Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, OON, mni, has expressed profound appreciation to His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for the appointment of Mr. Alfred Agaba Abah as the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Civil Service Matters.

In her statement of gratitude, which was contained in a statement issued by Eno Olotu, Head, Information and Public Relations, Office of HCSF, Mrs. Walson-Jack highlighted that Mr. Abah's appointment is a historic milestone, marking the first time such a position has been created within the Nigerian Civil Service.

She emphasized that this strategic decision reflects the administration's commitment to advancing ongoing reform efforts aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Civil Service.

Mr. Alfred Abah, an accomplished administrator and a retired Director of the Federal Civil Service, brings with him a wealth of experience, deep expertise, and a solid reputation for integrity and professionalism. With over three decades of dedicated service in various key roles across the public sector, his track record speaks to his capability in driving reforms and fostering organizational excellence. His character, built on transparency, fairness, and a passion for public service, makes him uniquely qualified to add

value to ongoing efforts to strengthen the Federal Civil Service's role in delivering quality service to the Nigerian people.

The HCSF noted that, under the leadership of President Tinubu and his Renewed Hope Agenda, the Nigerian Civil Service has witnessed transformative progress. These reforms have boosted the confidence of the Nigerian people in the government's dedication to good governance and public service excellence.

Mrs. Walson-Jack also reiterated her deep gratitude to President Tinubu for his unwavering support of the Civil Service as it undergoes revitalization, geared towards making it more efficient, effective, and accountable to the public.



Photo caption: Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Esther Walson-Jack, with newly appointed Senior Special Assistant to the President on Civil Service Matters, Mr. Alfred Abah, during a courtesy visit in Abuja.

By: **Kehinde Fajobi**

The Nigerian Civil Service, an essential backbone of governance, has evolved over the decades through various political and social changes. From its roots in the British colonial administration to its modern-day structure, the Nigerian Civil Service has undergone significant reforms aimed at improving its efficiency and adapting to new challenges.

Below is a look at the key stages in its evolution, from its inception in the colonial era to its current form.

Colonial Era (1900–1960): the foundation

The Nigerian Civil Service began during the colonial period when British administrators established governance structures to manage the territories that would later become Nigeria. The system was modeled after the British administrative framework, with the colonial government's key goal being to maintain control over the indigenous population and ensure the efficient extraction of resources.

The British-appointed colonial officers were at the helm of governance, managing sectors like public works, education, and health. Nigerian participation in the civil service was limited, and those who were employed were usually confined to lower-tier clerical and support roles. The civil service was rigid, centralized, and structured to serve the interests of the colonial administration rather than local development.

Post-Independence Period (1960–1970): Africanization and early reforms

With Nigeria gaining independence in 1960, there was a wave of optimism, and significant changes were made in the civil service to reflect the new political environment. The early years of independence saw the push for the *Africanization* of the civil service, a process aimed at replacing expatriate officers with Nigerians. The **Morgan Commission** of 1963 was one of the earliest efforts in this direction, addressing wage disparities and working conditions between Nigerians and expatriates.

During this period, the Nigerian civil service was seen as a vehicle for national development. The federal structure of the newly independent Nigeria meant that civil services were established at both the federal and regional levels, leading to decentralization and more opportunities for Nigerians to take on leadership roles.

However, challenges such as lack of experience, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political interference began to surface. The civil service became a battleground for ethnic and political rivalries, and the sense of professionalism that characterized the service during colonial rule began to erode.

1970s–1980s: military rule and the era of bureaucratic expansion

The civil service underwent major transformations during the period of military rule, which began in the late 1960s and extended through the 1970s and 1980s. Under successive military regimes, the civil service expanded significantly as the government took on a larger role in the economy through state-owned enterprises and development projects, particularly in the oil and gas sector. The **Udoji Public Service Review Commission** of 1972–1974 was one of the most notable reforms during this period. It aimed to modernize the service by improving salaries, working conditions, and introducing a results-oriented performance management system.

The **Udoji Reforms** also placed a greater emphasis on training and technology, recommending the introduction of modern management techniques to enhance efficiency. Despite its good intentions, the reforms led to an oversized bureaucracy, increased corruption, and inefficiencies due to over-politicization and a lack of implementation of performance measures.

By the 1980s, the civil service was bloated, inefficient, and largely ineffective. The oil boom of the 1970s had led to a rise in public sector employment, but with little focus on merit or performance. This overexpansion of the civil service during the era of military rule set the stage for subsequent reforms aimed at right-sizing and improving the service's efficiency.

1990s: decline and attempts at reform

The 1990s marked a period of economic decline and political instability in Nigeria, which had a significant impact on the civil service. Public sector wages stagnated, corruption increased, and the service became deeply politicized. The structural adjustment programs (SAPs) introduced by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and



Evolution of the Nigerian Civil Service:

From Colonial Era to Modern Day

the **World Bank** in the late 1980s and early 1990s also led to the reduction of the civil service workforce, but without accompanying reforms to improve efficiency and accountability.

During this period, the **Ayida Panel Report of 1995** made recommendations to streamline the service, decentralize decision-making, and return the civil service to its core functions. However, the reforms were only partially implemented, and the fundamental issues of inefficiency, corruption, and over-politicization remained largely unaddressed.

2000s: the Obasanjo era and renewed efforts at reform

The return to democratic rule in 1999 under President **Olusegun Obasanjo** brought renewed attempts to reform the civil service. Obasanjo's administration recognized the need to rebuild the civil service to ensure efficient governance and economic development. The **Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR)** was established in 2003 to drive the reform agenda and address key issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and the lack of professionalism in the service.

One of the most significant initiatives during this period was the **implementation of the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIIS)**, which aimed to eliminate the problem of "ghost workers"—a longstanding issue where non-existent employees remained on payrolls, siphoning government resources. Additionally, the **public service right-sizing exercise** was launched to reduce the bloated workforce and enhance efficiency.

Despite these efforts, progress was slow, and entrenched interests often blocked meaningful reforms. The civil service remained a reflection of broader issues in Nigerian governance, including corruption, lack of accountability, and political interference.

2010s–Present: recent reforms and the role of technology

The most recent phase in the evolution of the Nigerian civil service has been marked by a stronger focus on technology, transparency, and improving service delivery. The **Goodluck Jonathan** and **Muhammadu Buhari** administrations both introduced reforms aimed at leveraging technology to enhance civil service efficiency. The **Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS)** and the **Treasury Single Account (TSA)** were among the initiatives designed to curb leakages in

government finances and improve accountability.

Under President Buhari, there was also a renewed push to fully implement the IPPIIS system across all government agencies. By consolidating payroll systems and automating processes, the government sought to increase transparency and reduce corruption in the civil service.

However, despite these efforts, many of the old challenges remain, including bureaucratic bottlenecks, inefficiency, and corruption. The civil service continues to be seen as slow, ineffective, and often out of step with modern governance practices. Reform efforts, while commendable, have yet to fully transform the service into a merit-based, efficient institution capable of meeting the demands of a modern economy.

Key Challenges Facing the Nigerian Civil Service

- Bureaucratic inefficiency: Over-centralized processes and excessive red tape hinder decision-making and service delivery.
- Corruption: Despite technological interventions, corruption remains a major problem, from ghost workers to the misuse of public funds.
- Lack of accountability: Many civil servants operate without adequate oversight, contributing to a culture of impunity.
- Politicisation: Recruitment and promotion within the service are often based on political connections rather than merit, undermining professionalism.
- Resistance to change: Entrenched interests within the civil service have often blocked meaningful reforms.

Future Prospects: the role of leadership in reform

The appointment of Didi Walsón-Jack as the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation has generated renewed hope for the Nigerian civil service. With a track record of integrity, professionalism, and a commitment to reform, Walsón-Jack is seen as a potential catalyst for much-needed change. Her administration is expected to focus on addressing key issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and the lack of transparency.

As Nigeria continues to grapple with economic challenges and governance deficits, the civil service will play a crucial role in driving national development. Effective leadership, the implementation of reforms, and a renewed focus on accountability and professionalism will be key to transforming the Nigerian civil service into a modern, efficient, and transparent institution capable of meeting the needs of the Nigerian people.

Conclusion

The evolution of Nigeria's civil service from its colonial roots to the present has been shaped by political changes, economic challenges, and numerous reform efforts. While progress has been made, significant challenges remain, particularly around efficiency, corruption, and accountability. The future of the civil service will depend on sustained leadership, bold reforms, and a commitment to building a merit-based, transparent institution that can drive Nigeria's development agenda.



Effective leadership, the implementation of reforms, and a renewed focus on accountability and professionalism will be key to transforming the Nigerian civil service into a modern, efficient, and transparent institution capable of meeting the needs of the Nigerian people.

Highlighting 100 Days of Transformational Leadership: Prof. Olaopa on the Civil Service and Mrs. Walson-Jack's Vision



Prof. Olaopa

As part of a special publication marking the first 100 days of Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack as Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Professor Tunji Olaopa, Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission, shares his profound insights into the evolving landscape of the civil service.

In this exclusive interview, Prof. Olaopa evaluates the resilience of civil servants, the strides toward reform, and the transformative leadership Mrs. Walson-Jack has already demonstrated. From her seamless embrace of ongoing reforms to her collaborative spirit and focus on measurable impact, this discussion underscores the significant steps being taken to redefine the future of the Federal Civil Service.

This interview offers readers an inspiring perspective on leadership, reform, and the promise of a stronger, more efficient civil service for Nigeria.

How would you describe the role of the civil service in governance today?

The civil service remains the backbone of governance. Despite systemic and structural constraints, its resilience has been proven time and again. To this extent, one can confidently say that the civil service continues to uphold its vital role in supporting governance and policy implementation.

What is your assessment of the performance of the civil service?

While the performance level could certainly be higher, the critical reforms needed to address structural gaps have not been fully implemented. This limits the overall effectiveness of the

service. Civil servants are working under challenging circumstances with weak incentives, which past reforms have sought to address but are still a work in progress.

What reforms are needed to make the civil service more effective?

Nigeria deserves a more capable and efficient civil service to enhance service delivery and improve overall government effectiveness. Addressing weaknesses in the system will also help minimize exploitation by a few civil servants who take advantage of these vulnerabilities for criminal activities and corruption.

How is the Federal Civil Service repositioning plan addressing these challenges?

The repositioning plan is comprehensive, innovative, and strategic. It recognizes the need for alignment between the Federal Civil Service Commission and the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation. Collaboration is key to ensuring the plan's success. Additionally, metrics for performance measurement, modernization of processes, and holding stakeholders accountable are critical components of the strategy.

What has been the impact of the President's performance bonds initiative?

The performance bonds signed with key players reflect a commitment to measurable outcomes and accountability in governance. This aligns with the Federal Civil Service's goal of improving performance management,



Civil servants have a unique opportunity to make the service greater by cooperating with leadership and bringing innovative ideas to the table. Platforms like the "war rooms" she has established provide avenues for strategic communication and collaboration.

and it challenges us to concretize our strategies for greater administrative impact across the nation.

What is your impression of the new Head of the Civil Service's first 100 days in office?

Her tenure has been outstanding so far. She has fostered a spirit of collaboration, continuity, and focus. She has seamlessly integrated into ongoing reforms, successfully run the National Council on Establishments, and conducted tenure renewals and other key exercises for permanent secretaries. This demonstrates her preparedness and determination to make a meaningful impact.

How can civil servants contribute to the future of the Federal Civil Service?

Civil servants have a unique opportunity to make the service greater by cooperating with leadership and bringing innovative ideas to the table. Platforms like the "war rooms" she has established provide avenues for strategic communication and collaboration. With a committed leadership team, there is immense potential for growth and transformation in the service.

What is the key focus for the civil service moving forward?

The focus is on restoring integrity, strengthening gatekeeping responsibilities, and re-establishing the merit system as a cornerstone of competency-based human resource management. This collective determination will ensure a more professional and impactful civil service.



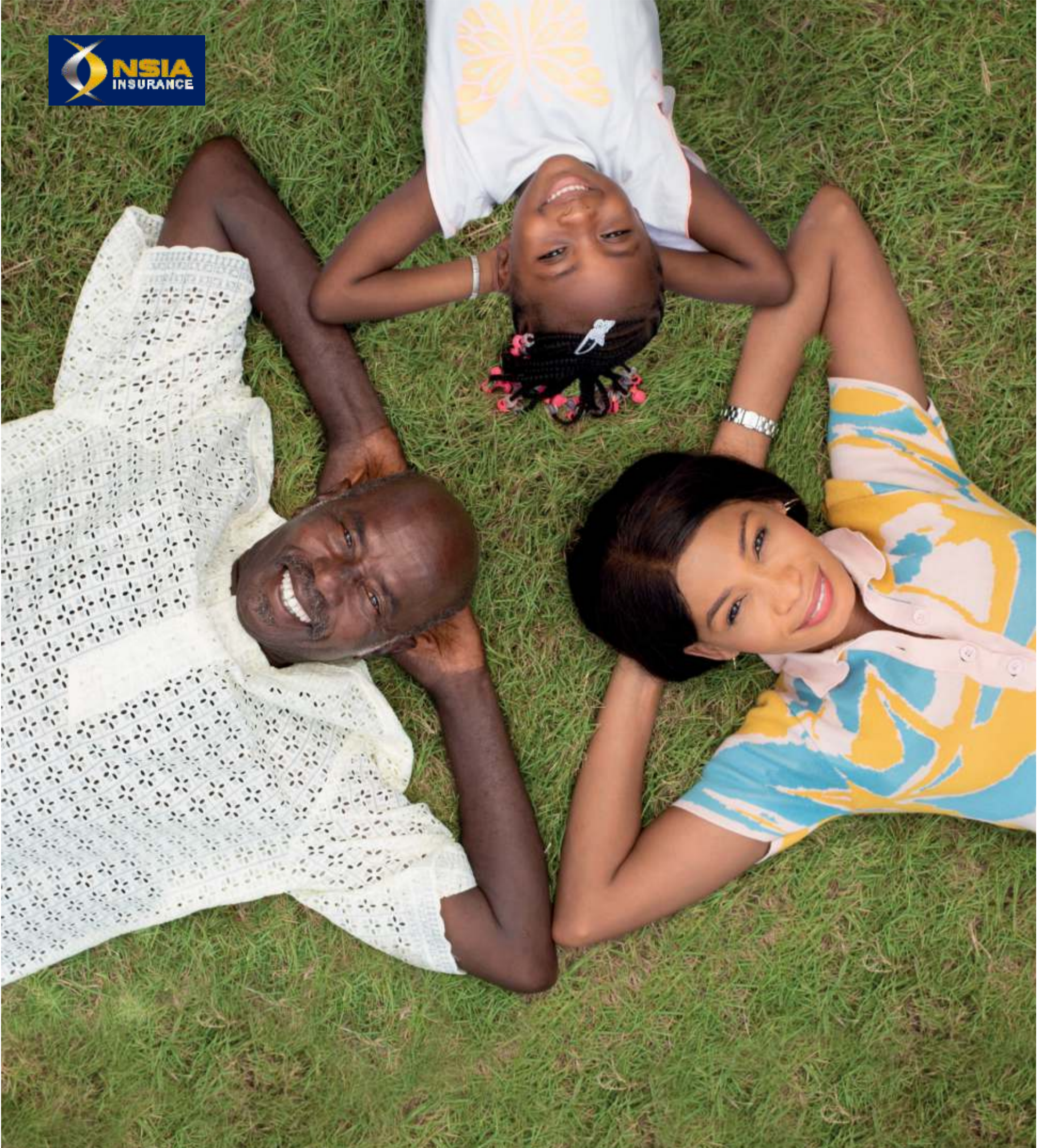
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PostView...with Adams Abonu

A Quintessential Civil Servant's Post-Retirement Reflections

We must strive to consciously inculcate the ideals that make society greater even when we have left the scene; this is when we can truly say we have impacted on the development of society." Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of the Northern Region, charging First Republic members of the Northern House of Assembly.

It is a mark of distinction for a public servant in contemporary Nigeria to display exemplary commitment to improving the quality-of-service delivery even after quitting the stage through retirement. The conventional manner of attitude is for those who have been at positions of power and authority turn a nonchalant-or at most, lukewarm towards issues of governance and how to improve the public sector. In a clime with this rather lackadaisical disposition, those who choose to make a difference through dint of hardwork and sheer commitment set a standard of service that makes them some sort of authority.

This brings to focus a new book from Tunji Olaopa's nurtured mind, 'Reforming the Reformable: Post-retirement Reflections on Nigeria's Civil Service,' an intellectual expose into the experience of the author in his quests for solutions through reforms in making public service conform to its purpose in Nigeria. Published by HEBN Publishers, this first-hand reflection is worth its own reflections which this piece aims to provide.

The seminal work comes in three dimensions- autobiographical, a narration of the history of civil service in Nigeria and reminisces of an integral administrator of the system. The author's choice of language was lucid enough to encourage reading as he outlined the convictions and reform insights which he acquired within a period spanning 27 years and his noble bids to see the transformation of the civil service as a viable avenue to national development.

Dr. Olaopa led his teeming readers down the memory lane to his formative years in Aawe in present day Oyo State where the unfortunate incidence of the 'burning man,' a manifestation of the dysfunctional politics prevailing then provoked his



Cross section of the Council of Retired Permanent Secretaries and Heads of the Civil Service of the Federation at the CORFEPS Week 2024 Colloquium in Abuja
Photo: Punch

nurturing mind to correcting the shortcomings of the system. It was this craving for knowledge, which got him high-school nicknames like "Advanced Level" and later "Professor-"that shaped his perceptions and triggered the desire to effect workable reforms. "I think it is from Plato's Republic that I began to put together a preliminary understanding of what reform means. Indeed, I first picked the word reform when in the history class, Martin Luther and his reformation thesis on the Catholic Church of the time was taught..." the author wrote in an introduction to the reflections. The philosophical musings of the author into how to effect reforms in a defected system was, agreeably, on a solid foundation of conviction.

Revealing further insights into his trajectory from the political science graduate of the prestigious University of Ibadan to a brief stint as part of the university system and subsequent joining of the Directorate of Mass Mobilisation, a social intervention initiative of (military) President Ibrahim Babangida to his

appointment as Speech Writer and Policy Analyst at the twilight of the Babangida presidency, Olaopa said the place of a renowned Professor of Economics, Oyetunji Aboyade encouraged him to do put in his best in correcting the malaise he has seen in the civil service system and "be a change agent!". The author's admiration of the professor is phenomenal as the 'Aboyade' nomenclature permeates pages of the book.

The book reveals further the connect between his widening experience in the civil service, where he had been appointed as Deputy Secretary of the famous White Paper Panel on Ayoda's Reforms in the Nigerian civil service, and his subsequent doctoral thesis titled, 'Nigerian Civil Service: A Framework for Reform (2006)', again from the UI.

"I came away from the doctoral experience with two critical insights, one negative and the other positive. The central thesis of my dissertation was simple but profoundly troubling. I discovered that in the Federal Civil Service, there are too many people doing nothing, too many doing too

little, and too few people doing too much. This fact, which unfortunately is still the norm today, has some frightening consequences. First, it led inevitably to the breakdown of establishment control and O&M which, with federal character policy, distorted the service's skills composition and manning level. Secondly, this created multiplier effects for the HR policy and led to the emergence of several operational gaps- performance, policy, process, capacity and resources. These consequent effects gradually enabled the system to ossify around a bureau-pathology characterised by blind conformism," the author captured his understanding of the problem with the civil service and the fronts for his subsequent reforms interventions.

Through the pages of Tunji Olaopa's inspiring reflections, the reader would observe the underlying commitment to reforming the Nigerian Civil Service to meet the challenges of the times: he expressed his "pain of retirement" in chapter one explaining that leaving the service at the time of "imminent change that President Buhari is methodically putting in place in all areas of Nigeria's institutional life" was painful; in chapter two he described the various factors that motivated his reform-oriented civil service career as "Providence Plan;" narrated the history of the public sector in Nigeria in chapter three under "History Matters," with subsequent chapters capturing the essence of his forays to the pinnacle of the Nigerian Civil Service.

A postscript which dwells on his ongoing reforms intervention through the conception of the Ibadan School of Government and Public Policy (ISGPP), policy development institution designed to improve governance and whom the author said aspires to be "Africa's Leading Policy Research Institution." ISGPP is evidently Olaopa's current preoccupation and government could find a development partner when it comes to formulating effective government policies.

The author's literary and journalistic prowess was further brought to bear in the book. The brief but vivid capture of a life irredeemably committed to improving systems for the betterment of humanity is recommended for those who are concerned about making Nigeria work for Nigerians.

Closing Remarks from the Editor

As we wrap up this edition, we reflect on the significant strides being made within Nigeria's civil service, driven by a renewed sense of leadership and purpose. From the innovative initiatives of Head of Service Didi Walson-Jack to the strategic partnerships aimed at improving employee welfare, it's clear that positive change is on the horizon. These efforts are not just about improving efficiency but also about boosting morale and building a motivated workforce that can better serve our nation.

This edition has highlighted the power of

collaboration through the CIPM's involvement in transforming human resource management. The partnership underscores the importance of public and private sector cooperation in fostering growth and improving lives.

We hope that the stories and insights shared here have inspired you and provided a deeper understanding of the ongoing reforms in our civil service. As we look forward to the next edition, we remain committed to bringing you relevant updates, success stories, and thought-provoking discussions on how our civil service can continue to evolve and

contribute to national development.

Thank you for your continued support and readership. We encourage you to share your feedback, as your voice is essential in shaping future editions. Together, let's keep the conversation going and stay focused on the mission of building a stronger, more efficient civil service for the benefit of all Nigerians.

Warm regards,
The Editor