

PROPOSALS FOR REDUCING THE SIZE AND COST OF RUNNING GOVERNMENT

Kojo P. Asante & David Asante Darko

Key points

Profligate or wasteful government expenditure has always been a subject of controversy in Ghana's fourth republic. In the leadup to the reading of the country's 2023 annual budget the Citizens Coalition, a coalition of leading CSOs and prominent Ghanaians suggested to the government a number of measures aimed at reducing the size and the cost of government.

Specific measures that were recommended include cutting the size of the ministerial team, reducing the number of presidential staffers, absorbing the secretariats for flagship projects within the MDAs, reviewing SOE expenditure on personnel, a ban on the importation of high fuel consumption vehicles in addition to measures already announced by the government.

This paper explores the prospect of saving the country much-needed revenue by reducing the number of ministries and ministers in government and exactly how this may be achieved.

INTRODUCTION

It is an uncomfortable fact that the current sovereign debt crisis in Ghana, the worst in the country since the year 2000, has visited severe economic hardship on the citizens. For 18 months beginning June, 2021, year-on-year rates of inflation in the country have risen consistently, going from 40.4% in October, 2022, to 50.3% in November, 2022, and finally to 54.1% for December, 2022, according to the Ghana Statistical Service. This has highlighted the urgency of prudent management and fiscal discipline by the country's economic managers. In a situation where the country's access to capital markets are closed, expenditure cuts are inevitable and the government must lead by example.

On October 26, 2022, barely a month before the reading of the country's annual budget for 2023, the Citizens Coalition, a coalition of leading CSOs and prominent Ghanaians held a press conference at the International Press Center to share its deep concerns about the deteriorating economic conditions and government's turbid response. At the press conference, the coalition listed a number of demands including the urgent need for government to undertake morale-boosting and confidence-building measures like a long overdue reshuffle and reduction in the size of government. Specific actions that were recommended include cutting the size of the ministerial team, reducing the number of presidential staffers, absorbing the secretariats for flagship projects within the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), reviewing State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) expenditure on personnel, a ban on the importation of high fuel consumption vehicles in addition to measures already announced by the government.

These measures were underlined as important for building the credibility of the government in its upcoming negotiations with labor, investors and other stakeholders on austerity measures that were to be taken to sustain the economy. These measures were shared with the President on November 4, 2022 when he met CSO leaders to engage on the ongoing economic crisis and government's efforts to address the challenges. At the meeting, the President reiterated the importance of getting citizen support and buy-in for government proposals for restoring fiscal consolidation.

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As part of agreed measures announced in the 2023 budget under a debt restructuring deal with the IMF to maintain macroeconomic stability in the economy, the government announced a debt exchange program that signals significant economic distress going into the future. Existing domestic government bonds are to be exchanged for new ones, the earliest of which are tipped to mature in 2027, and some, with maturity dates as distant as 2037. The proposed set of measures have dire implications for the financial sector, and mostly, local financial institutions, many of which may not survive the ramifications of these measures on their operations. Financial institutions will struggle to make good on their payment obligations to large sections of their clientele. The ordinary Ghanaian will continue to be exposed to wild upswings in the prices of goods and services and policy holders will encounter challenges securing their claims on their insurance policies.

The effects of these measures instituted by government on everyday living have been swift and pervasive. But while it urges citizens to bear with these measures and be prudent in their spending, the government's own response to the calls for structural adjustments within the government machinery to reduce expenditure and ease the plight of the ordinary Ghanaian, remains far from positive. It appears that every other sector of the economy has had to incur substantive inconvenience or financial loss in efforts to return the sovereign debts to levels that are sustainable. Every other sector of the economy, except government itself.

Against this backdrop, this paper reiterates some of the measures that have been proposed to reduce government spending, and examines them in more detail. We delve into how the ministerial team might be reduced in size and thereby optimized to cut down government expenditure.

Reducing the Size of the Ministerial Team

There have been several calls for the government to reduce the size of the ministerial team since the NPP government was installed in 2017. It must be acknowledged that President Akuffo Addo did reduce the ministerial team from the very large 120 ministers and deputies in his first term to 86 in his second term. Now that we are in an economic crisis, further reduction is needed. Suggestions have been made to reduce the ministerial team to 50 or less. A similar measure was taken by the Cote d'Ivoire government recently when it reduced its ministerial team from 41 to 32 to reflect current economic conditions.

What follows hereon is an effort to establish the prevailing structure of sector ministries in Ghana and the corresponding salaries and benefits ministers and deputies are accorded. We will indicate which ministries to merge, which to eliminate and which ministerial positions to scrap in order to save the country some much-needed revenue. It should however be noted that this analysis only focuses on the basic salaries, gratuities and the option of the 20% of consolidated salary in lieu of housing for ministers and their deputies into account. We do not consider the costs of such as expenses as security, driver, medical insurance, travel package, vehicle and fuel.

Currently, there are a total 85 ministers and deputies, consisting of 16 regional ministers

who are not part of the restructuring proposed here. The proposed restructuring targets the remaining 69 ministers and deputy ministers, consisting of 29 substantive ministers of cabinet, 39 deputy ministers of cabinet and 1 Minister of State¹.

Table 1 depicts the country's total number of ministries, ministers and deputy ministers of cabinet and indicates whether or not a minister or deputy minister also doubles as a Member of Parliament.

As depicted in the table, 20 of the 29 ministers of cabinet are also MPs, while 33 of the 39 deputy ministers of cabinet, also double as MPs.

Table 1 Ministerial Structure of Ministries

CURRENT MINISTERIAL STRUCTURE OF MINISTRIES											
	Ministry	Minister	Deputies		Ministry	Minister	Deputies		Ministry	Minister	Deputies
1	Ministry of Finance	Non-MP	2 MPs	11	Ministry of Energy	MP	3 MPs	21	Ministry of Defense	MP	1 MP
2	Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration	Non-MP	2 MPs	12	Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources ¹	Non-MP	1 MP	22	Ministry of Interior	MP	1 MP
3	Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization & Rural Development	MP	3 MPs	13	Ministry of Works and Housing	MP	1 MP	23	Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection	MP	1 MP
4	Ministry of Information	MP	1 Non-MP	14	Ministry of Roads and Highways	MP	2 MPs	24	Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations	MP	1 MP
5	Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Non-MP	2 MPs	15	Ministry of Railways Development ¹	MP	1 MP	25	Ministry of Youth and Sports	MP	1 MP
6	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development ¹	MP	1 MP	16	Ministry of Communications and Digitalization	MP	1 MP	26	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs ¹	MP	
7	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	MP	2 MPs	17	Ministry of Transport	Non-MP	2 MPs	27	Ministry of Public Enterprises	MP	
8	Ministry of Trade and Industry	Non-MP	2 MPs 1 Non-MP	18	Ministry of Education	MP	2 MPs	28	Ministry of National Security	Non-MP	
9	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture	Non-MP	1 Non-MP	19	Office of Attorney General and Ministry of Justice	Non-MP	2 Non-MPs	29	Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs	MP	
10	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation	MP		20	Ministry of Health	MP	2 MPs				

Source: Authors' construct

¹ The Minister of State is Freda Prempeh at the Ministry of Works and Housing. Mr. Charles Adu Boahen was also a Minister of State at the Finance Ministry until his recent dismissal by the President.

FACILITIES, PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS ACCORDED TO MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS IN GHANA

The subsequent tables present the list of salaries, facilities, privileges or benefits to which a minister or deputy minister is entitled. These figures and perks are derived from part of the recommendations contained in the report on Emoluments for Article 71 office holders by the Prof. Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu led Presidential Committee on Emoluments (PCE). As earlier indicated, this analysis only takes the basic salaries, gratuities and the option of the 20% of consolidated salary in lieu of housing for ministers and their deputies into account. The costs of expenses such as security, driver, medical insurance, travel package, vehicle and fuel are not included.

Table 2: Monthly Salaries for Ministers & Deputy Ministers

RECOMMENDED MONTHLY SALARIES FOR MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS					
Position	Salary				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
President	29,899	35,520	39,072	42,979	47,277
Vice President	26,909	29,600	32,560	35,816	39,397
Cabinet Minister – MP	22,724	24,996	27,496	30,246	33,270
Cabinet Minister – Non-MP	22,425	24,668	27,134	29,848	32,832
Minister of State – MP	20,930	23,023	25,325	27,858	30,644
Minister of State – Non-MP	20,631	22,694	24,964	27,460	30,206
Regional Minister - MP	20,930	23,023	25,325	27,858	30,644
Regional Minister – Non-MP	20,332	22,365	24,602	27,062	29,768
Deputy Minister – MP	19,136	21,608	23,769	26,146	28,760
Deputy Regional Minister – MP	19,136	21,608	23,769	26,146	28,760
Deputy Minister – Non-MP	18,837	20,721	22,793	25,072	27,579
Deputy Regional Minister – Non-MP	18,837	20,721	22,793	25,072	27,579

Source: Prof. Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu led Presidential Committee on Emoluments (PCE), 2020

At the estimated 2020 rates quoted in the report, the combined monthly salary for each of the 20 cabinet ministers who also happen to be Members of Parliament is GHC665,400.00. That of the 9 non-MP cabinet ministers amounts to GHC295,488.00. The monthly salary for one minister of state who is also an MP is GHC 30,644.00. The combined monthly salaries for 34 deputy ministers who are also MPs is GHC 977,840.00. That of 5 deputy ministers who are not MPs comes to GHC 137,895.00.

In a year, the combined salaries of all 20 cabinet ministers at 2020 rates amount to GHC 7,984,800.00, while that of the 9 non-MP cabinet ministers amounts to 3,545,856.00. That of one minister of state who is also an MP brings the figure to GHC 367,728.00. The combined annual salaries for 34 deputy ministers who are MPs takes it to a total of GHC11,734,080.00. That of 5 deputy ministers who are not MPs amounts to GHC 1,654,740.00. Together these sum up to an annual total of GHC, 25,287,204.00.

Table 3 presents a list of the standard facilities, privileges and benefits accorded ministers and deputy ministers in Ghana as part of their emoluments as Article 71 office holders.

Table 3: Privileges accorded to Ministers & Deputy Ministers

FACILITIES, PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS ACCORDED TO MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS IN GHANA		
Facility, Privilege or Benefit	While in Office	Out of Office
Office accommodation	Appropriately furnished and equipped office with adequate staff	None
Residential accommodation	Fully furnished official residence or 20% of consolidated salary in lieu of housing	None
Security	24-hour security service provided by the state	None
Transportation	One 4-wheel drive and one saloon vehicle, comprehensively insured, maintained, fueled and chauffeur-driven	Option to purchase one duty post saloon vehicle
Overseas travel for official business	Business class airline ticket, 4-star hotel accommodation, Protocol courtesies available	None
Medical and dental services, including health insurance	For office holder, spouse and children under 18 years of age. Maximum of 4 children in country	None
Other benefits		Gratuity, 4 months' salary for each year served



GHC, 25,287,204.00

COMBINED ANNUAL SALARIES FOR **34** DEPUTY MINISTERS WHO ARE MPs AND **5** DEPUTY MINISTERS WHO ARE NOT MPs

Residential Accommodation

Under the current structure of the ministries and current distribution of ministers and deputy ministers in the ministries, the cost of residential accommodation for ministers and deputy ministers at the 2020 salary projections from the report on Emoluments for Article 71 office holders by the Prof. Yaa Ntiamoah Presidential Committee is as depicted in Table 4. This is with the assumption that all ministers and deputy ministers have opted for the 20% of consolidated salary in lieu of housing.

As depicted in Table 3, residential accommodation for the current 29 Ministers and their 39 deputies cost the state an estimated total of GHC5,057,430.00 annually.

Table 4: Cost of Accommodation for Cabinet Ministers

COST OF ACCOMMODATION FOR CABINET MINISTERS (GHC) UNDER CURRENT STRUCTURE					
Position	Number	Monthly Salary per individual (2020 Rates)	Monthly cost of Residential Accommodation (at 20% of 2020 Rates)	Annual cost of Residential Accommodation for position	Combined Annual Cost of Residential Accommodation for position
Ministers who are MPs	20	33,270.00	6,654.00	79,848.00	1,596,960.00
Ministers who are not MPs	9	32,832.00	6,566.40	78,796.80	709,164.00
Minister of State who is an MP	1	30,644	6,128.80	73,545.60	73,545.00
Deputy Ministers who are MPs	34	28,760.00	5,752.00	69,024.00	2,346,816.00
Deputy Ministers who aren't MPs	5	27,579.00	5,515.8	66,189.60	330,945.00
Total	68	153,085.00	30,617.00	367,404.00	5,057,430.00

Source: Prof. Ntiamoah Presidential Committee on Emoluments (PCE), 2020

Gratuities

Under the current structure of the ministries, current distribution of ministers and deputy ministers in the ministries, the cost of gratuities for ministers and deputy ministers assuming the 2020 salary projections from the report on Emoluments for Article 71 Holders by the Prof. Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu led PCE to be constant over the duration of the 2020 to 2024 regime is the equivalent of 16 months' salary.

Table 5 shows that gratuities for the current 29 Ministers and their 39 deputies cost the state an estimated total of GHC33,716,272.00.

Table 5: Gratuity Structure for Cabinet Ministers

GRATUITY STRUCTURE FOR CABINET MINISTERS (GHC) UNDER CURRENT STRUCTURE				
Position	Number	Monthly Salary per individual (2020 Rates)	16 months of gratuity per individual	Total for total number holding position
Ministers who are MPs	20	33,270.00	532,320.00	10,646,400.00
Ministers who are not MPs	9	32,832.00	525,312.00	4,727,808.00
Minister of State who is an MP	1	30,644.00	490,304	490,304
Deputy Ministers who are MPs	34	28,760.00	460,160.00	15,645,440.00
Deputy Ministers who aren't MPs	5	27,579.00	441,264.00	2,206,320.00
Total	68			33,716,272.00

Source: Prof. Ntiamoah Presidential Committee on Emoluments (PCE), 2020

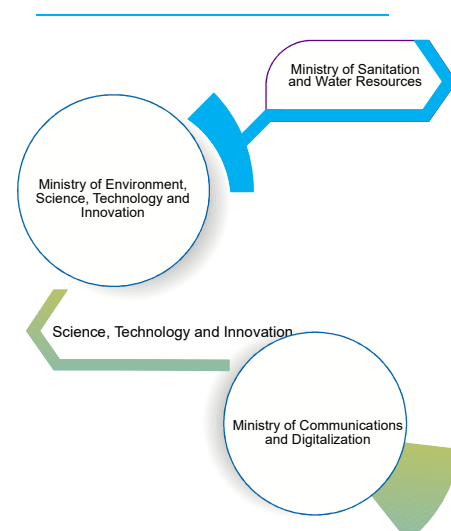
PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING OF THE MINISTRIES

It is the position of this paper that the current demarcation of the ministries facilitates a number of redundancies that can be addressed with the dissolution and in some instances the merger of some ministries, thereby reducing the size of the government and the cost of running government.

The measures hereby proposed will reduce the amount paid to ministers in salaries by GHC8,528,316.00 annually, a figure that is 33.73% of total amount paid in salaries to ministers, assuming the figures from the recommendations contained in the report on Emoluments for Article 71 office holders by the Prof. Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu PCE. Similarly, this stands to reduce the amount paid to ministers in gratuities by GHC11, 371,088.00 every four years, representing 33.73% in savings on the amount paid to ministers and their deputies in gratuities. These measures would also reduce the amount spent on accommodation for ministers and their deputies by GHC1,705,625.40, which is 33.73% of the estimated amount spent on residential accommodation for ministers and their deputies annually.

The proposal therefore is for the dissolution of the Ministry of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Railways as their functions are integrated in the functions of other ministries.

The Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources can be absorbed into the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation. The Science, Technology and Innovation functions of the Ministry of Environment can then be absorbed by the Ministry of Communications and Digitalization.



THE MINISTRY OF SANITATION AND WATER RESOURCES CAN BE ABSORBED INTO THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION. THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT CAN THEN BE ABSORBED BY THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITALIZATION

Table 6: Proposed Restructuring of Ministries

PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING OF MINISTRIES		
Ministry		Proposed Action
1	Ministry of Public Enterprises	Dissolve
2	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	Dissolve
3	Ministry of Railways	Dissolve
4	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development	Re-integrate with the Ministry of Agriculture
5	Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources	Integrate with the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology Innovation
6	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation	Science, Technology and Innovation Aspect can be integrated with the Ministry of Communication

Source: Authors' construct

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development can then be re-integrated with the Ministry of Agriculture. This implies there will no longer be a Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, a Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, a Ministry of Public Enterprises, a Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and a Ministry of Railways Development. The next step in the proposal is to then limit each ministry to a maximum of one deputy minister, and getting rid of the two Ministers of State, resulting in a new distribution of ministers and deputy ministers as appears in Table 6. There will now be 4 Ministries with a minister but no deputy ministers and 20 Ministries with a minister and a deputy minister each. The specifics of this new distribution of ministers and deputy ministers at the ministries is as appears in Table 7.

Under the proposed restructuring, there will be 16 Ministers who are MPs, 8 Ministers who are non-MPs, 19 Deputy Ministers who are MPs and 2 Deputy Ministers who are non-MPs.

The ministries with one minister and no deputy minister will now consist of the newly restructured Ministry of Environment, Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs. The Ministry of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization and Rural Development, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Works and Housing, Ministry of Roads and Highways, Ministry of Communications and Digitalization, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Education, Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The total number of ministries will be reduced from 29 to 24.

In addition to this, the position of the Minister of State under the Ministry of Works and Housing, will be removed.



THIS PROPOSAL IMPLIES THERE WILL NO LONGER BE A MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE, A MINISTRY OF SANITATION AND WATER RESOURCES, A MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES, A MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND A MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS DEVELOPMENT

Table 7: Proposed Restructuring of Ministries

STRUCTURE OF MINISTRIES AFTER PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING											
Ministry	Minister	Deputies		Ministry	Minister	Deputies		Ministry	Minister	Deputies	
1	Ministry of Finance	Non-MP	1 MP	11	Ministry of Works and Housing	MP	1 MP	21	Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations	MP	1 MP
2	Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration	Non-MP	1 MP	12	Ministry of Roads and Highways	MP	1 MP	22	Ministry of Youth and Sports	MP	1 MP
3	Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization & Rural Development	MP	1 MP	13	Ministry of Communications and Digitalization	MP	1 MP	23	Ministry of National Security	Non-MP	
4	Ministry of Information	MP	1 MP	14	Ministry of Transport	Non-MP	1 MP	24	Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs	MP	
5	Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Non-MP	1 MP	15	Ministry of Education	MP	1 MP	25			
6	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	MP	1 MP	16	Office of Attorney General and Ministry of Justice	Non-MP	1 Non-MP	26			
7	Ministry of Trade and Industry	Non-MP	1 MP or 1 Non-MP ¹	17	Ministry of Health	MP	1 MP	27			
8	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture	Non-MP	1 Non-MP	18	Ministry of Defence	MP	1 MP	28			
9	Ministry of Environment	MP		19	Ministry of Interior	MP	1 MP	29			
10	Ministry of Energy	MP	1 MP	20	Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection	MP	1 MP				

Source: Authors' construct

¹ Going forward, we will for the purpose of convenience, assume that the sole Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Trade and Industry under the structure is an MP, though this will result in a lower estimate of savings made than would be the case if the Deputy Minister for the Ministry is assumed not to be an MP.

THE SAVINGS TO BE MADE WITH PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING

Under the proposed new structure, salaries, gratuities and the amount spent on residential accommodations for ministers and their deputies will be reduced on account of the number of ministers who are MPs being reduced from 20 to 16, ministers who are not MPs being reduced from 9 to 8, ministers of state who are MPs going from one to none, deputy ministers who are MPs going from 34 to 19 and deputy ministers who are not MPs going from 5 to 2.

Savings on Salaries with Proposed Restructuring

As determined earlier, the amount paid to Ministers and their deputies over the course of a year comes to a total of GHC 25,287,204.00. The total cost of salaries paid to ministers and deputy ministers under the proposed structure, comes up to a total of GHC16,758,888.00².

⁷ The Ministry of Trade and Industry has one Deputy Minister who is an MP as well as one Deputy Minister who is not an MP. In the event that the eliminate the Deputy Minister who is an MP, the monthly savings in salary then become GHC28,760.00 and the combined annual salary saved then becomes GHC28,760.00 X 12 = GHC345,120.00. Calculations performed under this section assumed that the deputy minister is an MP.

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The proposed structure results in savings of $GHC\ 25,287,204.00 - 16,758,888.00 = GHC8,528,316.00$. This amounts to 33.73% savings, a decrease in the amount paid to ministers and their deputies.

Savings on Residential Accommodation with Proposed Restructuring

As determined earlier, residential accommodation for the current 29 Ministers, 1 Minister of State and their 39 deputies cost the state an estimated total of $GHC5,057,430.00$ annually. Aggregated costs of residential accommodation under the proposed restructuring amounts to $GHC3,351,777.60$

An estimated amount of $GHC5,057,430.00 - 3,351,777.60 = GHC1,705,652.40$, constituting 33.73% of the estimated amount spent on residential accommodation for ministers and their deputies annually, will be saved with the proposed restructuring of the ministries and reduction in the numbers of deputy ministers in some ministries.

Savings on Gratuities with Proposed Restructuring

Gratuities were determined earlier to cost $GHC33,716,272.00$ for the current 29 Ministers, 1 Minister of State and their 39 over a term. Under the proposed restructuring, these costs are now reduced to $GHC22,345,184.00$.

An estimated amount of $GHC33,716,272.00 - 22,345,184.00 = GHC11,371,088.00$, constituting 33.73% of the estimated amount spent on gratuity for ministers and their deputies.

CONCLUSION

Further Cuts Feasible at the Presidency and SOEs

The recurrent trend in governance in the fourth Republic shows that the erratic and impulsive expansion of the government structure as well as staff levels in state institutions triggers poor spending practices that puts undue pressure on the treasury. At the edge of an economic precipice where government is imposing on the private finances of citizens, cutting the interest earnings of some local investors and withholding entire investments of others, it is absolutely incumbent that the government acts to cut its enormous expenditure.

The annual report to parliament on staff of the presidential office from January to December 2021, indicated that overall staff strength at the presidency was 995 personnel consisting of political appointees, civil service personnel and other staff of the public service. The redundancies and the needless replication of roles this created in light of the staggering number of employees already engaged at the various ministries, departments, agencies, SOEs, parastatals and other state institutions makes for inefficiency and stems the flow of resources to other equally important agencies of government.

Wages and salaries for the office of the president for 2022 were projected to cost $GHC136.4$ million in the 2020 budget. However, the amount spent on staff wages and salaries at the presidency reportedly escalated to 823 million in 2021, an increase of about 503%.

Roles listed in the report also included such positions as a church relations manager, a diaspora church mobilization officer and overseer of the National Cathedral. There is also a youth ambassador for diaspora affairs, even though the country has over 60 embassies across the globe.

The report made mention of 706 civil/public service personnel under the presidency. The report also indicated that the presidency staffs 3 directors of communication, 5 deputy directors of communication, 5 technical communications assistants in addition to 2 communication specialists, a technical director to the presidential advisor on media, 2 communication specialists, a communications and research officer, executive assistant to the ministry of information, two senior information technology officers, 4 information technology officers, a technical assistant for video, another for photos, a communications consultant, 3 communications/IT officers, among others to attend to communications and media. It is hard to determine the exact value that these staff bring to the presidency that it could not derive from the robust array of staff of the Ministry of Information which has a Minister and 2 deputies.

Similar questions surround other appointments such as 256 'junior political appointees' or what 'supplies' or 'materials' at the presidency require a staff strength of 15 personnel to manage. Many have also raised questions as to why the National Cathedral should have a secretariat at the presidency.

The country's ability to return its debt to sustainable levels within the shortest possible time is entirely dependent on its ability to reduce government expenditure and be prudent in the management of resources. A logical first step and compelling show of commitment will be a conscious and intentional reduction in government expenditure. The secretariats for remaining flagship programs can be absorbed into the respective ministries, even though parliament deserves to be commended for having already absorbed some into their respective ministries. There is an undeniable case for the review of the staff strength of the presidency, ministries, departments, agencies, SOEs, parastatals and other state institutions. We also must pursue a ban on the importation of high fuel consumption vehicles in addition to measures already announced by the government.

Certain expenditures of SOEs, including the conditions of service of their CEOs and the wanton escalation in staff levels which very often isn't only redundant but and ultimately constitutes an adverse effect on productivity, desperately require an extensive review. This is very crucial in light of the steep sacrifices being imposed on citizens, it has been suggested that the combined annual expenditure by the CEOs of the top 5 SOEs in the country, could pay the monthly salaries of as many as 4,000 newly employed teachers.

Currently, the country is at a crossroads where how adept it proves at straddling the difficult financial challenges it currently faces, will prove crucial not just to the sustenance of the economy but the sustenance of its stability and ultimately its democracy. It is why it is absolutely imperative that at a time when self-sustenance is proving increasingly difficult, the government that is supposed to secure its citizens is not found to be aggravating their plight. Its sole prerogative at this time must be geared towards ensuring that it constitutes as little a burden as possible to its citizens and that the good of the country is placed well above all other considerations.



**706 CIVIL/PUBLIC
SERVICE PERSONNEL
WORK UNDER THE
PRESIDENCY**

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