

YEA employs 282 PWDs

• Include former tollbooth workers

By Emmanuel Bonney & Mary Owusu Asamoah

THE Youth Employment Agency (YEA) has offered employment to 282 persons with disabilities (PWDs). They include persons who previously manned tollbooths across the country.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of YEA, Kofi Baah Agyapong, who made this known at a media interaction in Accra yesterday, emphasised that the recruits "are all staff of the YEA, and not beneficiaries".

"These individuals have been

appointed as staff members of our agency, with those holding diplomas or higher qualifications assuming roles as Regional Disability Desk Officers, and those with senior high school qualifications appointed as District Disability Desk Officers across all 16 regions and 266 operational districts respectively," he said.

Budget 2022

The 2022 Budget Statement and Economic Policy presented to Parliament articulated a governmental directive aimed at abolishing road tolls.

The Minister of Roads and Transport subsequently announced the immediate suspension of toll collection at various

toll points nationwide.

Following that, over 200 PWDs lost their livelihood as a direct result of the policy shift.

The individuals, many of whom said they were the breadwinners of their families, were now faced with unemployment and its accompanying hardship.

Agency

However, Mr Agyapong said as an agency tasked with the pivotal mission of facilitating employment opportunities for the youth, "we recognised our duty to respond with compassion and practical solutions".

"Rather than lamenting the circumstances, we viewed this as an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to effecting positive change," he said.

He said the 282 PWDs recruited possessed at least a senior high school qualification.

Pride

Mr Agyapong said the employment with the PWDs did not only afford them a sense of pride and financial stability, but also positions of influence where they could contribute meaningfully to policy formulation and implementation concerning disability rights.

Furthermore, he said, the agency was committed to ensuring the social security and welfare of those category of employees, including the payment of relevant statutory contributions.

"They will enjoy the same economic benefits and privileges as any other government employee, ensuring their financial security and stability," he said.

"In addressing the needs of individuals without basic qualifications, the Youth Employment Agency has developed alternative pathways through impactful programmes such as the Business and Employment Assistance Programme (BEAP), Youth In Skills training, and our garment and textile training initiative under the Garment and Textile module," he said.

The YEA CEO expressed appreciation to the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Ministry of Roads and Transport, the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD), and the Centre for Employment of Persons With Disabilities for their "invaluable collaboration and support" in making the initiative a reality.

He also extended his gratitude to President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, Vice-President Mahamudu Bawumia, the sector minister, and board members for their support and guidance.

Reactions

The President of the Centre for Employment of Persons with Disabilities (CEPD), Alexander Kojo Tetteh, described the initiative as a great one which led employed 282 PWDs at a go, saying it provided a great opportunity for them.

He said he was, therefore, happy that the YEA had brought up such an initiative, adding that it would pave the way for the other unemployed persons with disabilities.

The Chairman of the Former Tollbooth Workers for Persons with Disabilities, Rashad Mohammed, said he was happy that some of his colleagues had been re-engaged.

"We are happy that they have taken 99 (of our members). It's not enough, but it is okay, and we thank God for that," he said.



• Kofi Baah Agyapong (middle), the Chief Executive Officer of YEA, with some PWDs after the meeting