

GOVERNOR LALONG ASSURES ITF OF ROBUST PARTNERSHIP

The Plateau State Government has reiterated its resolve to continue to partner the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in the Implementation of its various skills acquisition and empowerment programmes. This is just as it has disclosed that Plateau State has been a major beneficiary of ITF's intervention programmes.

The State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, made this commitment in an address at the closing ceremony and graduation of 30 Trainees of the Passion to Profession Programme (P2PP) for the Southern Senatorial Zone at the premises of Shendam Local Government Secretariat.

Governor Lalong, who was represented by his Deputy, Prof. Sonni Tyoden averred that the state Government was more than convinced that skills acquisition was the way to go, hence its decision to key in by sponsoring additional trainees for ITF skills acquisition programmes aside the number allotted to it by the Fund.

The Governor expressed optimism that given the number of skills and empowerment programmes the ITF was implementing, there was light at the end of a dark tunnel as it concerns unemployment, describing it as "an intractable problem and a major challenge not just to Plateau State but the country at large".

He noted that apart from the empowerment of youths with skills, ITF had contributed meaningfully to the upliftment of the living conditions of its immediate communities and the educational sector in the State through its Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

While presenting start-up packs consisting of high quality industrial sewing machines and all other accessories to the 30 graduating trainees, Professor Tyoden admonished them to see the P2PP as a life changer and an avenue for them to make meaningful contribution to the development of the Nigerian economy, just as he cautioned them against selling any or all of the items which he described as "your tickets to sustenance".

Earlier in his remarks, the Director-General of the ITF, Sir Joseph Ari informed the Governor that the Passion to Profession Programme was one of the Fund's intervention programme conceived under its Reviewed Vision: Strategies for Mandate Actualization. He explained that it was aimed at accelerating and fast

tracking the impartation of technical skills to Nigerians in order to create jobs and reduce unemployment in line with the Federal Government policy direction.

According to Ari, several programmes benefitting over 350,000 Nigerians were implemented under the reviewed vision which commenced in 2016. He listed the programmes implemented under the plan as National Industrial Skills Empowerment Programme (NISDP), Women Skills Empowerment Programme (WOSPEP), Construction Skills Empowerment Programme (CONSEP), Agripreneurship and the Skills Training Empowerment Programme for the Physically Challenged (STEPP-C), adding that unlike the other initiatives that bring trainees to a formal training environment, the P2PP was unique as it employs the Brazilian Model where training is taken to the door step of the trainers using Mobile Training Units.

Providing a background to the programme, the DG said the P2PP was first implemented between June and November 2017 at the ITF Model Skills Training Centre (MSTC) in Abuja, and trained 140 Nigerians in Tailoring and Cement making, who were given state-of-the-art sewing machines as start-up packs alongside other supports for them to set up their own.

The DG, who observed that with the unemployment situation in the country, the 30 that were being graduated might appear as a drop in the ocean, affirmed that the ITF was committed to changing the narrative of unemployment in the country.

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Miss Adidi Ruby Petkwap expressed appreciation to both Federal Government and the ITF for positively impacting their lives.

She assured that they would make the best use of the knowledge they had acquired and the start-up packs given to them for the benefit of the people of the state and urged the ITF to sustain the programme so that other youths would benefit from it.

The highpoint of the event was presentation of start-up packs by the Deputy Governor, the Director General, the Long Gamai of Shendam and the Executive Chairman of Shendam Local Government Council to the 30 beneficiaries and was greeted with loud cheers by the beneficiaries, their relatives and well-wishers who graced the event.