

ITF DG ADVOCATES STAKEHOLDERS COLLABORATION AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

The Director General of the Industrial Training Fund, Sir Joseph Ari has said that tackling unemployment through skills acquisition cannot and should not be the responsibility of the ITF alone.

Ari who was speaking at a recent interaction with the media in Abuja emphasized that the cooperation and collaboration of state governments, the Organised Private Sector (OPS), the media and other stakeholders was crucial to getting many Nigerians equipped, adding that such collaborations would even have a multiplier effect, compared to what the ITF can achieve on its own.

The DG stressed that such collaborations were especially essential in the implementation of the Fund's 2018 technical skills acquisition programmes, which are targeted at equipping 13,000 Nigerians with life skills for employability and entrepreneurship.

In his words, "I will seize this opportunity to call on state governments and other stakeholders to sponsor additional trainees. Such sponsorship will entail payment of monthly stipends to the trainees, payment of master craftsmen allowance and provision of start-up kits to trainees."

The DG, who described skills acquisition as "a universal currency of the 21st century" noted that, the doors of the Fund were wide open for collaboration on any aspect of human capacity development and vocational & technical skills training.

He further added that in view of growing realization that the government and its agencies alone cannot provide jobs for all Nigerians, he appealed to the media to sensitise Nigerians on the importance of the acquisition of technical skills.

“Indeed no country whether developed or developing has ever achieved that. Instead, the resort has been to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which is the only sure way to gainfully engage as many Nigerians as possible”, he said.

Sir Ari also said Nigerians should be made to understand that, “skills acquisition is not the preserve for the never-do-wells, the poor and the wretched in society, as a change in perception in this regard would have half-tackled the problem of unemployment and other development issues in Nigeria”.

He said such sensitisation was especially needed now in view of revelations of a collaborative survey between the ITF and UNIDO, which indicated that despite spiraling unemployment, 925 trades were either difficult or hard to fill in the country’s labour market.

“The breakdown showed that 19.7 per cent vacancies were in the housing sector, 13.9 per cent in petro-chemical sector, 14.7 per cent in other goods, 11.4 per cent in the auto industry.

“Others are 10.3 per cent in textiles, 10.1 per cent in steel, 8.9 per cent in the services sector and 3.3 per cent in the leather industry.

“The report also noted that 15.7 per cent of all hard to fill vacancies were due to lack of technical skills, 11.8 per cent due to lack of basic IT skills, 9.2 per cent due to lack of advanced IT skills and between 9.2 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the vacancies were due to the lack of requisite soft skills.”

He said that the report which further corroborated in-house skills gaps surveys of the ITF, showed that despite rising unemployment, numerous vacancies still existed in several sectors of the National economy.

These vacancies could not be filled by Nigerians because of the absence of the requisite skills or were being filled by foreigners.

In order to address the problem, stem the spiraling unemployment, and drive President Muhammadu Buhari's job creation efforts, management came up with a list of implementable programmes for year 2018.

The programmes are aimed at skill acquisition in all the sectors already identified as well as in the building and electrical industry, and agriculture, all on various platforms to train 13,000 Nigerians in five months.

He listed the programmes as National Industrial Skills Development Programme (NISDP), Women Skills Empowerment Programme (WOSEP), Air-conditioning & Refrigeration (Training on Wheels) and Designing, and Garment Making (Training on Wheels) for Nigerian youths.

Others are Skills Training and Empowerment Programme for the Physically Challenged (STEPP-C), Post-Harvest Techniques and Project Development, Aqua-culture/Fish Farming, Manure Production, Crop Production/Greenhouse Technology, Poultry farming, Training Programme Development on International Marketing.

