

## ITF NIGERIA WON'T SURVIVE WITHOUT SKILLS ACQUISITION- ARI

The Director-General of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Sir Joseph Ari, has said that Nigeria risks total collapse if the nation does not prioritise skills acquisition and entrepreneurship as a development strategy.

He said recent studies revealed that the country's population will grow to 500 million by 2050 and if drastic action was not taken now by policy makers to equip Nigerians with skills, the country would become a shadow of itself in the near future.

Ari disclosed this recently during an interaction with the media in Jos.

In his words: "we must drum into the ears of Government, drum into the ears of policy makers and drum into the ears of critical stakeholders that the country will collapse if urgent action is not taken to encourage the provision of skills acquisition and entrepreneurship among students and idle Nigerians.

"I will be very glad if my son says he want to be a mechanic, we should not only encourage paper qualification but skills development, that is the only way Nigeria can manoeuvre out of unemployment and the turbulent economy," he said.

He explained that the ITF in 2017 trained 60,000 Nigerians from 2,300 organisations and over 50,000 youths and other vulnerable groups were equipped with skills for employment and entrepreneurship through the National Industrial Skills Development Programme (NISDP) and the Women Skills Empowerment Programme (WOSEP) among others.

Ari stressed that 500 indigent rural women from 13 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) were trained across 32 centres in 11 trades namely; Events management, Cosmetology, Poultry farming, Bead making, Baking and Pastry, Soap/Disinfectant/Detergent making, Hair making, Food processing, Tailoring and fashion design, Tie and Dye, and Electrical installation.

He said over N1 billion has been disbursed as students and supervisory allowances to 328 tertiary institutions under the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to encourage skills acquisition among student rather than acquiring only paper qualification.

Ari said Nigeria has a lot of graduates, who only acquired the theoretical knowledge of their field of studies but cannot fit into the working environment because of the lack of requisite skills.

