

## ITF EMPOWERS PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS WITH SKILLS

The Director-General of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Sir Joseph N. Ari has said that people living with physical challenges need to be equipped with requisite technical and vocational skills to be strengthened socially and economically.

Sir Ari stated this during the official closing ceremony of the Fund's Skills Training and Empowerment Programme for the Physically Challenged (STEPP-C) in Jos.

Citing estimates by the Centre for Disability and Development Innovations in 2016, which approximated the number of disabled people in the country to be as high as 25 million, the DG ,who was represented by Hajiya Safiya Mansur, a Deputy Director of the Fund stated that with the high number of people living with disability, it became necessary for the Industrial Training Fund to train and empower them.

"As the physically challenged persons like the able bodied persons have certain peculiar, innate qualities if exploited will lead to normal lives. Most of them are trainable and with proper care and support from the government and stakeholders, their talents could be fully harnessed to reduce their dependency and promote their economic and social development", He said

He added that no fewer than 120 physically challenged persons have benefited from the skills training and empowerment programme across the country.

The programme, according to the DG, was part of the 2018 implementable programmes to equip many Nigerians with skills for employability and entrepreneurship in line with the policy direction of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Sir Ari said that in most societies including Nigeria, any major disability renders an individual more vulnerable to poverty owing to cultural factors and the absence of policies that would have ensured that they thrive as any normal person.

The DG congratulated the graduands for being the pioneer beneficiaries of the programme and urged them to take full advantage of the opportunity provided by the training to not only put food on their family's table but to also make their own meaningful contribution to the Nigerian economy.

Sir Ari also commended the Plateau State Government and other stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to the success of the programme.

Also speaking at the event, Chairman, Disability Rights Commission in Plateau State, Mr James Lalu, thanked the ITF for taking responsibility to empower its members as most people and organisations do not see persons living with disability as valuable asset to the economy.

He also added that the Commission was ready for further collaborations with the ITF.

Also at the closing ceremony was the Director-General of the Plateau State Micro-Finance Development Agency, Mr Haggai Gutap who offered to train additional 30 persons living with disability in collaboration with the Fund.

The participants were intensively trained in footwear making and wig cap making over a period of 2 months, with evidence of their products on display at the closing ceremony.

