



SUSTAINING THE JOB CREATION MODEL BY LAW P35



RESOURCE PERSONS RATE SCHEME P39

OkowaPlus

A PUBLICATION OF DELTA STATE JOB AND WEALTH CREATION BUREAU

NO. 7 NOVEMBER 2020

**5 YEARS OF
JOB & WEALTH
CREATION
SCHEME**

**TRANSFORMING MORE YOUTHS FROM
JOB SEEKERS TO JOB CREATORS P15**

**PLUS: DELTA
TRADITIONAL
RULERS GIVE
THEIR VERDICT**

P57



ME (STEP)

(YAGEP)



THIS ISSUE



5



26



39



59



61

4 Prologue

5 News

15 STEP Testimonials

26 YAGEP Testimonials

32 Partnership that Works

35 Sustaining the Job Creation Model by Law

39 Training Resource Persons Rate Job Creation Scheme

41 Feature

49 PhotoSplash

56 PPSP Testimonials

59 Innovation

61 Royal Fathers

68 CAN Chairman

OkowaPlus

A PUBLICATION OF DELTA
STATE JOB AND WEALTH
CREATION BUREAU

© All rights reserved.

All correspondence to be addressed
to Communications Unit, Delta State
Job and Wealth Creation Bureau,
Anwai Road, Asaba.

Telephones: 0903 861 0329;
0815 112 3322; 0812 627 7167

Website: www.deltastatejobcreation.ng
Email: info@deltastatejobcreation.ng

Mirroring Feedback from Stakeholders

Fully conscious that a programme derives its legitimacy from acceptance and sustained demand by its stakeholders, the planning, design, and implementation of our youth-focused job creation programmes (STEP, YAGEP and GEEP) have since inception in 2015, been service-based, user-focused and stakeholder-oriented. These binding programme ingredients are surmised in our axiomatic philosophy that “the success of the Job Creation Scheme is measured by the success of the beneficiaries.” Put another way, their success underscores the success of the Job Creation Scheme.

In line with this philosophy, the fundamental questions that task and shape our programme design and implementation are: What constitutes success of job creation beneficiaries? Who is a successful beneficiary? How is success of the job creation scheme measured?

A successful beneficiary is one who satisfactorily completes the job creation programme cycle, from training through start-up of own enterprise to becoming entrepreneur and business owner. The training cycle includes onboarding and orientation, life skills and personal effectiveness training, occupational skills training, post training proficiency test, and entrepreneurship and business management training. At the end of these successive trainings, the beneficiary is provided with start-up grant (equipment, tools, materials, money) to own and run his/her enterprise. So, the ultimate indicator of success of the job creation programme is that a beneficiary starts up, owns, and runs his/her enterprise. And progressively, the self-employed beneficiary grows and matures to become an employer of labour.

Since “one cannot be a judge in his/her own case”, the success of the job creation programme should be

by Prof. Eric Eboh
Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer



“judged” by the stakeholders themselves. Assessments by different stakeholders give independent, objective, unbiased and evidence-based feedback on the conduct, functioning, performance, and impact of the job creation programme. Following five years of unbroken implementation of the job creation programme, the stakeholders (beneficiaries, trainers, resource persons, community leaders, civic organisations, business and economic leaders) have accumulated sufficient experience to say whether the job creation programme is successful or not.

Against this backdrop, this edition of *OkowaPlus* is dedicated to feedback from job creation programme

stakeholders. Accordingly, the distinctive feature is its singular focus on “what the people know, say or think about the job creation programme” and “how the people assess the job creation programme.”

Within the context of stakeholder feedback, this edition also features the historical milestone – the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau Law (Law No. 11 of 2019). This enabling law, by which the Job Creation Office, has been legally and statutorily transmuted into Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau, is the live evidence of stakeholder acceptability and extant demand for the job creation programme over the years. There cannot be any greater evidence of the legitimacy and stakeholder approval of the job creation programme than the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau Law, which resulted from rigorous procedures and requirements for law making by the peoples’ representatives.

This edition provides richly diverse content to inform, enlighten and satisfy its audience. Therefore, I am confident that you will enjoy the style, form, and content of this edition.

Happy reading!



FISH FEEDS FOR YAGEPRENEURS IN FISH PRODUCTION

YAGEP Beneficiaries Boost Food Security in Delta State

BY GERTRUDE ONYEKACHUKWU-UTEH

The Delta State Government is poised to provide further attention to Agriculture to ensure food security, job and wealth creation as well as economic stability especially in this trying time of global fall in the price of oil due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It already has 259 youth farmers in the 2019/2020 Cycle.

More beneficiaries of the Delta State Government's Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) continue to receive farm inputs and support packages to boost food production on the premise of the benefits of the scheme.

The beneficiaries include YAGEPreneurs in Piggery, Poultry, Fish

Production and Crop Production.

The expectation is that there would be abundant food supply in the state at the end of the production cycle of each farm enterprise. It should be enough to feed the people and to sell to other parts of the country.

While Poultry (broilers) has 58 YAGEPreneurs in the cycle, 32 YAGEPreneurs are farmers of layer birds. The state estimates that YAGEPreneurs in broilers would produce 113 metric tonnes of live birds while YAGEPreneurs in layers will produce 4.1 million eggs.

The 71 YAGEPreneurs in Fish Production would produce 74 metric tonnes of table fish in four to six months while the 24 YAGEPreneurs in Piggery will produce 307 metric

tonnes of pork.

Other estimates are for the 74 YAGEPreneurs in Crop Production to produce 588 metric tonnes of cassava in the cassava category. In contrast, those in the maize category will produce 296 metric tonnes of grains.

Meanwhile, beneficiaries in crop production in Delta North Senatorial District received their support package at the Delta State Agricultural Rural Development Agency in Ibusa (DARDA). The Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer, Prof Eric Eboh, explained that Governor Ifeanyi Okowa was proactive in ensuring the transfer of cash to beneficiaries in Poultry, Fish Production and Crop Production to purchase livestock/seedlings for their enterprises.

He said beneficiaries in Crop Plantation within Delta North Senatorial District who had concluded land preparation, purchased and planted their seedlings were in DARDA to receive the recommended bags of fertilizers and agrochemicals for pest and weed

control.

A beneficiary in Plantain Production, Nwosu Votary (Aniocha North LGA) affirmed the experience had been fantastic right from the training. According to him, "Earlier, I was given money to buy 500 suckers of high breed plantain suckers which I planted after preparing my land. I am in DARDA to receive 11 bags of fertilizer and eight cans of agrochemicals for my farm."

He said that additional 500 suckers to the 200 he had before would make a tremendous difference in his enterprise, leading to business expansion, food security, financial stability, and job creation for other unemployed youths.

Also, Owolabi Ebiere (Patani LGA) in Cassava Production expressed her joy for the opportunity to benefit from the programme. She said it would boost her capacity to produce more cassava tubers, become self-independent and contribute to food supply in the state.

In Warri, Boyi Yihzuo Charles (Warri SouthWest LGA) in Poultry emphasized that the inclusion of existing farmers into the YAGEP has increased his relevance in the poultry business. He affirmed that the aftermath of the State Government's support package would grow his business. "There is scarcity of poultry products in Ogbe-Ijoh. With 300 broilers and 120 bags of feed to take them to maturity, I will take over the market there," he added.

He commended Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for encouraging and helping youths to go into agriculture which he said is a money-spinner, and if well invested in could make Delta State and Nigeria economically stable.

Commendations as Delta State Gives Starter Packs to STEP Graduands Amid COVID-19 Pandemic



A STEPNEUR WITH HER STARTER PACK

Beneficiaries and onlookers alike have commended the Delta State Government for not only continuing with the job creation programme but also increasing the beneficiaries by 107 despite the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.

The second batch of the Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) beneficiaries brought the number in the 2019/2020 Programme Cycle to 219.

They received their Starter Packs at ceremonies over three days recognizing persons trained under the Green STEP and Brown STEP categories. The events complied with COVID-19 guidelines of social distancing as the organizers divided recipients into morning and afternoon sessions and groups of 20 persons.

Reactions from the beneficiaries show enthusiastic and well-motivated youths. Kelvin Athora (Udu LGA) trained in Audio-Visual and Photography under Green

STEP. He was grateful to the State Government for the opportunity, affirming that the Starter Pack would help him to earn a living and to train other youths.

Glory Akpoduado (Ughelli South LGA) trained in Fashion and Textile Design. She worked as a salesgirl because her parents had no money to establish her in the fashion business after her training. The Starter Pack from the Delta State Government has changed her status.

The Brown STEP graduate received an industrial sewing machine, an industrial weaving machine, a generator, a cutting table, an electric iron, and ₦96,000.00 microcredit for shop rent in Ughelli. Miss Akpoduado said she is determined to work hard to become financially independent, train and employ other youths to work for her.

The mother of Favour Oseoghene Dennis (Isoko South) who trained in Fashion and

Textile Design threw caution to the wind as she danced around joyously in appreciation of the Governor Okowa-led government for the opportunity given to her daughter. The mother, Mrs Oletu Ewoma, stated, "I am dancing because I did not expect this kind of starter pack for my daughter. I did not have money to train her in school. I would not have been able to buy all these for her. God has used Governor Okowa to establish her. As her mother, I will guide her to ensure that she applies the knowledge acquired and these items to improve herself and that of our family".

The Chief Job and Wealth Creation

Officer, Prof Eric Eboh added: that the ability of the participants to complete the training successfully despite the Coronavirus pandemic was because of the State Government's commitment to improving the state economy through entrepreneurship development and their willingness to be trained.

Prof Eboh added: "Despite the harsh economic realities in the state due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Governor has kept to the promise of establishing you with starter packs. More than 95% of you were successful in the Completion Proficiency Test, which was a clear indication that you participated actively

during training. Today 107 of you are being established in Fashion and Textiles Design; Audio Visual and Photography; Hairdressing, Makeover and Braiding".

He disclosed that the Starter Pack component is a grant while the shop rent is microcredit with a six months moratorium payable within 24 months. The Job Creation Office structured it in such a way that beneficiaries could quickly repay the loan.

Over 5,000 youths have participated in the Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) and the Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) in the past five years.

Delta State Holds Start-Up Workshop For 2019/2020 Cycle Green YAGEPpreneurs In Poultry



REPRESENTATIVE OF CJWCO, MR. SAM NDIKANWU, PRESENTING DAY OLD CHICKS TO A BENEFICIARY IN POULTRY

BY PROMISE OGANA

The Coordinator of YAGEP in the Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer, Mr Samuel Ndiakanwu has admonished beneficiaries of the Delta State Government's Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) in Poultry Production to be

diligent in their businesses.

He spoke to the 14 Green YAGEP 2019/2020 Cycle beneficiaries who graduated from a three-month training course in various farms across the state. He advised them to utilize the inputs and their training to become great poultry farmers.

Miss Emmanuella Clinton, a resource person, lectured the beneficiaries on how to prepare their farms to receive day-old chicks (DOC) and on brooding, vaccination and pre/post-arrival of DOC. She stated that the right application of vaccine while brooding would help eliminate mortality, stressing that their approach to vaccination of the birds may either affect their birds negatively or positively.

Speaking on behalf of other beneficiaries, Mr Ebenezer Uzoma commended the State Government for establishing them in poultry production. He appealed that the State Government should sustain the programme to engage more unemployed indigent youths.

"I am so happy that I am part of the selected few to be established with the starter packs, knowing fully well that I shall no longer go back to doing menial jobs to survive. I am grateful to God because my story has never been a palatable one due to unemployment", he remarked.

The first tranche of items given to each beneficiary included four stoves, a roll of nylon, ten baby feeders, ten baby drinkers, 20 adult drinkers and 20 adult feeders.



REP. OF THE CJWCO, STEP COORDINATOR, MR ONYEISI NKENCHOR ADDRESSING THE ASSESSORS

STEP Assessors Tasked on Standards

The Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Office has called on assessors to maintain a high standard in assessing the competence of beneficiaries who graduated from the State Government's Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Training (STEP).

Prof Eric Eboh, the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer, made the call at a meeting the Office held with STEP trainers and assessors in Asaba. The panel discussed a scheduled Post-Training Proficiency Test (PTPT) for the second batch of 2019/2020 Cycle STEP graduands who recently completed their training.

Prof Eboh stated that the assessors were invited to the meeting to enable them to work together to generate questions for the graduands based on the STEP training module.

In the past, the State Government established STEP graduands with starter packs immediately after

training. Delta State introduced PTPT following reviews and appraisals of its job creation programmes. PTPT ensures that beneficiaries are grounded in their skills area before getting the starter packs to establish..

He added that the introduction of PTPT has helped to enforce greater discipline in the programme as it has compelled the beneficiaries to take the training more seriously, thereby making them better equipped to sustain their businesses.

The Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer conducted PTPT for 112 STEP graduates three weeks before this new set.

"Today, we have new skills. We do not need everyone to pass out of the programme before we assess them. We are to assess those of them who graduated last week in Catering and Confectionery; Hair Dressing, Makeover and Braiding; Audio-Visuals; Fashion and Textile Designs and Cosmetology," he remarked.

He disclosed that the selected assessors comprised of job creation trainers and staff of the Technical and Education Board (TVEB). The Job Creation Office drew them from the three senatorial districts to cover the skills for which the STEP graduands were to be tested in and to cater for beneficiaries in Warri and Asaba and environs simultaneously.

Eboh tasked them to ensure that the questions are 100% practical and to uphold the high standard for which the programme has earned renown. He urged them to ensure that successful *STEPpreneurs* are those who can stand their ground in the world of entrepreneurship.

Mrs Voke Egwede, CEO of Jazz Stitches, Ughelli, spoke for the recipients. Mrs Egwede welcomed the introduction of PTPT in the STEP programme as it has made the trainees more determined to be proficient in their skills area and to qualify for the establishment with starter packs.

Repeat STEP Beneficiaries Applaud Governor Okowa For Their Second Chance



STEPRENEUR VIVIAN IGBEN IN COSMETOLOGY

BY GERTRUDE ONYEKACHUKWU-UTEH

Beneficiaries of the Delta State Government's Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) who failed the initial Post Training Proficiency Test have expressed their gratitude to Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for giving them a second chance.

The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude while receiving their starter packs in Asaba after they completed their training and passed the second PTPT set for them.

Ajueyitisi Blessing (Uwvie LGA) who graduated in Hairdressing, Makeover and Braiding, said she was grateful for the opportunity the Governor has given to beneficiaries who failed the PTPT to repeat the test.

According to her, "It was a painful

experience for me because I realized that I did not put in much effort. I had to pay my trainer to retrain me for one month. I made sure I put in more effort, night, and day, to achieve success. I thank our Governor for the opportunity he gave to us to retrain to become entrepreneurs. I hope to grow my business to train others."

On her part, Igben Vivian (Ethiope West) in Cosmetology explained that she could not sleep for three days when she missed receiving the starter packs along with her mates because she failed the PTPT.

While expressing happiness at the quality of items that make up her starter pack, she recounted her experience, "I paid to relearn. With more efforts and seriousness, I passed the test to qualify for a Starter Pack. Are all these items mine? I am grateful to Governor Ifeanyi

Okowa. I shall put them into good use to make Delta State proud."

Ahworegba Goddy (Isoko South LGA) in Event Management and Decoration, said he missed the first proficiency test because his phone was unavailable when the Job Creation Office sent the invitation. He was optimistic that he would use his skill as an Event Manager to live a meaningful life and to create jobs for other unemployed youths.

Earlier the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer, Prof Eric Eboh, congratulated them for their ability to follow the process successfully to the end.

He disclosed that 26 STEP beneficiaries in Cosmetology; Event Management and Decoration; Fashion and Textile Design; Hairdressing, Makeover and Braiding, and Plumbing were to receive their starter packs.

The 26 beneficiaries constitute the third batch of those who have received starter packs in the 2019/2020 Programme Cycle. Apart from the five in Plumbing, the rest were spillovers from the first and second batches. They had to undergo a remedial course on their own and returned to retake the PTPT.

"They reassessed themselves, and we administered the test to them, and they came out successful. PTPT was introduced in the fourth cycle to ensure that the beneficiaries learned the skill. It is part of the State Government's efforts to enforce discipline," he pointed out.

Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Wealth Creation, Barr Tony Omonemu, advised them not to sell their starter packs. He urged that they put the packages into maximum use to fulfil the vision of the Governor of nurturing them into great entrepreneurs who would drive the state economy.

109 STEP Beneficiaries Trained in Business Management

One hundred and nine persons in the second batch of the Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Training programme recently received additional training in Entrepreneurship and Business Management courtesy of the Delta State Government.

The Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training is the last part of the curriculum before the Delta State government certifies them and grants them starter packs to run their businesses.

Participants cover various disciplines including Audio-Visual & Photography (17), 51 in Hairdressing, Makeover & Braiding, four in Catering & Confectionery, 35 in Fashion & Textile Design and two in Cosmetology.

The 2019/2020 Cycle participants included those whose training covered three months under Green and Brown STEP beneficiaries in

Fashion and Textile Designing who trained for four months.

Delta State Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer Prof Eric Eboh told the participants that the EBMT training underscores the business and management elements in the job creation programme. Participants must learn how to manage their businesses effectively and compete well with other players in the market.

The Coordinator of STEP, Mr Onyeisi Nkenchor, represented Prof Eboh at the opening session. Prof Eboh added that participants would receive training in business management, customer care, funding, business plan, feasibility study, and record-keeping, among others.

STEP structured the training in two sessions daily to comply with guidelines on the management of COVID-19. They organised participants in batches of 20 persons each. It featured 20 *STEPpreneurs*

resident in Warri and environs for the morning sessions and another 20 beneficiaries who live in Asaba or Agbor attended the afternoon sessions.

Beneficiaries exulted over their participation in the training. Akpibere Fejro from Patani LGA thanked the Delta State Government for the opportunity of her training in Hairdressing, Makeover & Braiding. She pledged to use the knowledge she received and her starter pack to improve her cosmetics business and generate more income for her family.

Okonye Chinwe (Ika North East) trained in Audio-Visual and Photography. He was emotional about his plight and the life-changing opportunity offered to him on a platter of gold. He said his case was that of hopelessness considering his poor background, expressing delight that the training has changed his story.

Okonye added that the training exposed him to modern techniques in photography and film editing. "I never knew what it meant to tell a story through photography. I have learnt a lot. I am hopeful that with my starter packs, I shall establish to make my life more meaningful and to attain my potentials in life," he stated.

Some of the lectures stood out as high points for the participants. They included "Principles and Practices for Starting a Business" by Pastor Afolabi Adun, "How to Write and Use a Business Plan" by Salvation Alibor and "Mentorship for Start-Ups" by Mr Eddy Mekwuye, the Executive Assistant to the Governor on Youth Monitoring and Mentoring.



A RESOURCE PERSON, PST. AFOLABI ADUN, INTERACTING WITH A STEP GRADUAND DURING EBMT

STEP Graduands Get Starter Packs

Graduates of the 2019/2020 cycle of the Business Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme have received Starter Packs to commence their businesses. The Starter Pack from the Delta State Government includes machinery and equipment as well as a micro-credit to enable payment of rent for their shops.

The micro-credit has a repayment schedule of 24 months with a six-month moratorium. The Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer approved the release of the Starter Packs to beneficiaries who finished the training and passed the Completion Proficiency Test.

The *STEP*repreneurs included persons trained in Catering and Confectionery; Decoration and Event Management; PoP, Screed-Making and Painting; Production of Cleaning Agents, as well as Hairdressing, Makeover and Braiding. Their training module was for three months.

The Coordinator of STEP in the Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer, Mr Nkenchor Onyeisi commended the beneficiaries for completing all the activities in their

programmes.

Mr Nkenchor commended the state government for sustaining the programme in the past five years. Through STEP, he noted, Delta State has provided vocations to thousands of unemployed youths.

Beneficiaries usually come out stronger from the rigorous training covering activities such as Orientation and Personal Effectiveness Training, hands-on training in their chosen crafts, the Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training and the Completion Proficiency Test.

Nkenchor added, "The job creation programme is a progressive package. Progression into the next stage builds on the previous one. Without success in one, you cannot proceed to the next phase. You are among the successful ones who enrolled for the programme and graduated without a hitch. I am particularly happy for you that you started well and that you are finishing strong".

He charged them to remain focused and committed to their businesses, to register their enterprises and to hit the ground running to become great entrepreneurs and



CJWCO'S REP, MR ONYEISI NKENCHOR PRESENTING AUDIO-VISUAL STARTER PACK TO A BENEFICIARY

job creators in the shortest possible time.

Some of the beneficiaries who spoke to our reporter expressed their gratitude to the State Government for offering them the platform to acquire skills free of charge and for nurturing them into entrepreneurs.

They pledged to use the acquired skill to improve their lives and to become job creators.

DTHA Confirms Eboh as Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer

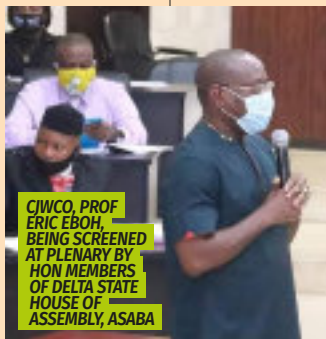
The Delta State House of Assembly has confirmed the appointment of Prof. Eric Eboh as the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer of the State.

The confirmation of the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer followed a motion moved to that effect on Tuesday, October 20, 2020, by the Majority Leader of the House, Hon. Tim Owhefere and was seconded by Hon, Engr. Emeka Nwaobi at the Plenary presided by the Speaker Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori.

The speaker, while eulogizing the sterling qualities of the appointee, commended him for his role in enhancing Job and wealth Creation in his first tenure.

While availing him the privilege of taking a bow and go, the Speaker, however enjoined him to sustain the good work in the Job and Wealth Creation drive of the State aimed at consolidating the Smart Agenda, now Stronger Delta Vision of the State.

The State Governor, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa, had sent a letter to the Assembly requesting for the regularization of the



CJWCO, PROF. ERIC EBOH, BEING SCREENED AT PLENARY BY HON MEMBERS OF DELTA STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, ASABA

reappointment of Prof. Eric Eboh as the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer, Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau.

The Governor, in the letter, recalled that the State Legislature had passed the Job and Wealth Creation Law 2019 to strengthen the former Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer and provide legal backing to its operations.

He said section five, sub section two of the law stipulated that the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer shall have a tenure of four

years and maybe reappointed for another term of four years. The Governor noted that since the reappointment of the Prof. Eric Eboh as the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer of the Bureau, predates the effective date of the law, it becomes necessary to regularize his reappointment in tandem with respect to tenure of office.

The Governor explained that the purpose of the letter was to seek the approval of the House to regularize the reappointment with effect from August 26, 2019.

YAGEpreneurs Hail Okowa for Ponds Maintenance

YAGEP beneficiaries engaged in Fish Production at Ugbokodo in Okpe Local Government Area have commended the Delta State Government for the renovation of their fish ponds.

The YAGEpreneurs made the commendation in a message delivered to the Governor through the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer, Prof Eric Eboh.

“On behalf of all the YAGEpreneurs in Fish Production located in YAGEP Fish Farm Cluster at Ugbokodo in Okpe Local Government Area, I wish to thank the State Governor, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa, for the great job he is doing for us. We are forever grateful to him for the on-going dyke maintenance in our cluster. May God richly bless him.”

The President of the Ugbokodo-Okpe YAGEP Fish Farm Cooperative Association, Mr Eseoghene Ashedagho, recalled that the cluster had the challenge of high tide as a result of heavy rainfall in 2019 with the negative outcome of massive fish loss by the YAGEpreneurs.

He said this adversely affected their fish businesses as so many of them were almost out of business, adding that they appealed to the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer for assistance.

“Work is on-going now. Raising of the dyke and walkways of the fish ponds with extra two or three layers depending on the level is very timely, especially now that the rains are becoming heavy. We only made our appeal in September last year. The state government acted promptly. The maintenance would have been too expensive for us to handle unaided,”



he remarked.

“We remain ever grateful to our Governor and the Chief Job and Wealth Creation Office as we look forward to more assistance to help us sustain our businesses”.

The Delta State Government through the Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer established 244 fish ponds in Ugbokodo in Okpe Local Government Area in two previous cycles to enable the YAGEpreneurs to begin their enterprises in Fish Production.

Job Creation: Sustaining The Delta State Economy Through Brown YAGEP

BY GERTRUDE ONYEKACHUKWU-UTEH

The Delta State Government has begun the distribution of farm input/support to beneficiaries of its Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) in the 2019/2020 Cycle in continuation of its job creation programme.

This set of beneficiaries of the farm input/support from the State Government are the Brown YAGEpreneurs in Poultry and Fish Production.

Brown YAGEP beneficiaries are existing youth farmers who already have practical knowledge, skills and experience in relevant agricultural enterprises such as Poultry, Piggery, Fish Production and Crop Production, but need support for expansion.

Brown YAGEP stemmed from the State Government's commitment to strengthening its job creation programme and in furtherance of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa's leadership style of all-inclusiveness. The programme extends attention to existing youth farmers to boost their production and to encourage more youths to go into agriculture. The vision is to also reach out to all Delta youth farmers through government's agricultural interventions as much as the state funds can accommodate.

The central support packages include retraining, provision of livestock, animal feeds and medication for beneficiaries in Poultry, Piggery and Fish Production. Beneficiaries in Crop Production receive funding for land preparation, seedlings, fertiliser and other agrochemicals for



A BROWN YAGEPRENEUR, MACQUEN NJUVWE, WITH HER FIRST TRANCHE OF FISH FEEDS FOR HER FARM

pest and weed control.

The State Government gives the support package to strengthen their farm enterprises for increased food production and development of the agricultural value chain towards sustaining the growth of the State's economy.

The Assistant Coordinator YAGEP in the Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer, Mr Charles Chiejiene, spoke with journalists recently at the fish farms of two beneficiaries at Kwale and Ozoro. He explained that 65 Brown YAGEpreneurs in Fish Production would receive 1,000 post-fingerlings and 80 bags of high-quality fish feeds of various sizes (2mm, 3mm, 4.5mm, 6mm and 9mm) to grow their fish to maturity.

Mr Chiejiene said the State Government transferred cash earlier to each beneficiary to purchase post-fingerlings, adding that he was in their farms to monitor their progress.

One of the beneficiaries, Njuvwe Macqueen (Ndokwa West LGA) said the State Government's intervention through YAGEP was timely for her. It would contribute to bridging the

shortfall in fish supply caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to her, "Before now I was struggling. The support of 1,000 post-fingerlings and 80 bags of feed will help my fish business to grow faster. Despite the lockdown, my job as a fish farmer has not locked down. While so many youths are lamenting of

hunger and contemplating suicide, I am meaningfully engaged."

In Ozoro, Asaba Abraham (Isoko South) upon receiving the first tranche of ten bags of feed, expressed his gratitude to the State Government for including existing youth farmers into the job creation programme.

"Though my farm is on a large scale, I have never benefitted from any government support programme for farmers. This gift is the first time, and it will boost my production. I encourage the government to give more attention to existing farmers to solve the fish deficit in the State, and to encourage more youths to go into agriculture," he said.

The YAGEP Programme Officer for Poultry, Mr Edoja Okeh, handed over poultry feeds to Brown YAGEpreneurs in Poultry in Ughelli and Warri. He said that YAGEP selected 66 poultry farmers carefully to benefit in broilers or layers farming in the 2019/2020 Programme Cycle.

Mr Okeh said YAGEP gave 300 day-old broilers, 30 bags of starter mash and 90 bags of finisher mash to 34 of the

farmers. He came to deliver the first tranche of 30 bags of bird feeds to the beneficiaries in Ughelli and Warri.

He added that 32 of the beneficiaries under the Layers category would receive 300 point-of-lay birds, 30 bags of grower feeds, and 30 layer feeds in the next tranche.

Okeh emphasised that each beneficiary in the broiler category would after sales of the stock at maturity make between ₦750,000 to ₦900,000, adding that if they reinvested the proceeds, it would transform the fortunes of the beneficiary for good.

Onobruhere Sylvester (Ughelli North LGA) and Okeme Christabel (Okpe LGA) applauded the State Government for investing in the agricultural sector. They were satisfied with the transparent selection process that qualified them for the programme. They appreciated the training and the support package.

They said such support would help to eradicate importation of poultry products into Nigeria as Delta State will be self-sufficient in poultry supplies and will supply to other parts of the country.

An eyewitness in Ughelli, Mr Emmanuel Yarhere, told reporters that he was amazed at the quantity and quality of support given to the beneficiaries. "I am a driver engaged by one of the beneficiaries to convey his feeds. I waited in disbelief thinking it was a scam until the truck loaded with feeds arrived in Ughelli. Though I am not part of it, I can see it is reality. I heard the Governor has been doing this for five years now. This is real. Governor Okowa is the best!" he exclaimed.

No doubt, the creation of YAGEP in Delta State has triggered a new generation of agripreneurs in the State. These, of course, have multiplier effects on the state economy. The commitment of the Delta State government to sustain the programmes would drive economic diversification. It will create jobs, provide food security and support the economy of the state.

Why Trainees Do Proficiency Tests Before Entrepreneurship Training

As 69 third batch STEP trainees attend

The Job and Wealth Creation Office introduced the Post-Training Proficiency Test (PTPT) to ensure that persons in the job creation programme of the Delta State Government participate fully and imbibe the lessons of their training before the state empowers them with Starter Packs.

Success in the PTPT earns enrolment in the Entrepreneurship and Business Management training programme and then to the receipt of Starter Packs from the government.

Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer, Prof Eric Eboh, explained the order and significance of the various training schemes at the enrolment of 69 trainees from the third batch of STEP for the entrepreneurship programme. He emphasised that the EBMT is for those who complete their vocational training in their chosen areas as well as the Post-Training Proficiency tests.

"So far a total number of 291 STEP

beneficiaries who were successful in the PTPT have gone through the EBMT in the 2019/2020 Programme Cycle with 114 in the first batch, 109 in the second and 68 in the third batch", Prof Eboh disclosed.

Prof Eboh explained that the third batch of STEP beneficiaries are those who graduated in Cosmetology; Decoration and Event Management; Fashion and Textile Design; Hairdressing, Makeover and Braiding; Information Technology Services; Plumbing; Welding and Fabrication.

He pointed out that some of them ought to have received their starter packs but are still undergoing EBMT because they failed the first PTPT organised for them and had to retrain themselves at their own cost to qualify. He thanked the Delta State Government for its magnanimity in giving them a second chance. Coordinator STEP, Mr Onyeisi Nkenchor, represented Prof Eboh at the one-day event.

In addition, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Job Creation, Hon.

Patrick Okei, advised participants to think outside the box and to figure out what application would help to distinguish them from their counterparts. He prayed for their financial multiplication as well as self-discipline. He urged that they maintain the right attitude and adopt effective communication.

Chinonso Illomechine from Aniocha LGA learnt Information Technology Services and responded on behalf of other beneficiaries. She said the training exposed her to tips on how to manage her business and to write a business plan. She pledged to use the knowledge acquired to grow her business and employ other persons to work with her.

Blessing Ajueyitsi from Uvwie LGA majored in Hairdressing, Makeover and Braiding. She thanked Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for giving her a second chance to upgrade her knowledge to enable her to become successful in the PTPT and to qualify for EMBT and starter pack.



A CROSS SECTION OF STEP GRADUATES IN FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN DURING PTPT AT NEOPELE, WARRI

STEP

Testimonials

The Delta State Job Creation programme has trained over 5,000 beneficiaries and established them with bumper starter packs to own and run their enterprises. In five years of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa's administration, the programme has continued to yield tremendous results. The multiplier effects of this intervention have placed the State on a higher pedestal among other states. STEP beneficiaries while lauding the programme speak on their achievements, prospects, and challenges.

BY GERTRUDE ONYEKACHUKWU-UTEH.

NAME: **IGOH OGHENEKARO** (2018/2019 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: **ISOKO NORTH**

ENTERPRISE: **FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN**

Oghenekaro Igoh is the outstanding CEO of Kandice Apparel, whose story is an inspiration to anyone desirous of success in the face of daunting challenges. Her shop is a three-bedroom apartment, well-equipped with many sewing machines, each trainee manning hers. I was shocked to know that the smallest in size of all the ladies present owns the shop. I demanded to verify her status through her job creation identity card and her National Identification Card to ascertain her identity. Stating that I was impressed with my findings is an understatement. The sky is indeed her starting point considering her determination to succeed where graduates have failed despite her pathetic background and educational level.

Oghenekaro is a product of a broken home. She has only the Basic Education Certificate (BECE), but her impeccable diction would make any listener believe she is a university graduate. Her parents abandoned her, and she could not complete

secondary education. She became a photographer to put food on her table. Fortunately, she found favour with God when her pastor enrolled her in a fashion home to acquire skill in fashion designing. To further draw her closer to her destiny, her trainer who incidentally is a job creation trainer enrolled her for further training under Brown STEP. The rest is history as in less than one year of establishment, this dynamic youth entrepreneur has a fashion training institute, has acquired ten manual sewing machines, five electric sewing machines and has over thirty trainees. She has a strong drive for success and has carved a niche for herself.

She shares her story, "I had taught I would go into the conventional roadside tailoring, but after the trainings I received at Songhai Delta, my mind was opened to other possibilities beyond the conventional fashion designing things. I began to think of starting a fashion institute. After establishment with starter pack, I got a shop at City Complex and started a school. In less than one year, the shop became too small, and I saw the reason to expand. Therefore, I rented this three-bedroom for N350, 000 annually.

I do lots of adverts online. I currently have two billboards: each of them costs N80, 000 monthly. My students come from within and outside Delta State, and I realise my funding through training fees. I have thirty students currently. Six persons have graduated. I run a morning and afternoon session. I make clothes quite all right, but my niche is training for both male and female who are interested in fashion."

Her vision is to become one of the best fashion designers in town and to acquire university education through the National Open University by self-



sponsorship. “I advise my students not to look at the things that the Government did not do for us or how our parents have failed us, instead how we use the little we have is what matters. My driving force is Biblical. Through job creation training, I discovered that God had given me a talent which I must maximise to receive more from Him,” she added.

She scored the job creation programme 100%. She said the structure of the programme is such that the system would change anyone willing to learn. The programme taught her discipline, financial management, staff management, customer management and how to create a niche for herself with particular reference to Pastor Afolabi Adun’s lecture, “Distinguishing Oneself from Others Makes the Difference.” She appreciated the State Government for the opportunity to produce facemasks for the prevention of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

NAME: UBANI FRANK (2017/2018 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: ANIOCHA NORTH

ENTERPRISE: AUDIO-VISUAL AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Frank Ubani holds a BSC in Human Physiology but was unemployed for five years. He was in and out of menial jobs till he got enrolled in the job creation programme and that changed his mind-set and motivated him to realise that he could do other things. He is the CEO of CFO Media Productions, Asaba.

The services of CFO Media Productions include video coverage, media and events photography, online digital marketing, production of documentaries, drone services, among others. His zeal to maximise his entrepreneurial ability propelled him to venture into building-interiors decoration (screed-making, 3D panels, paints and painting, tiling, PoP, wallpaper designs,

making and fixing of window blinds and more.

In his quest to acquire more knowledge, for professionalism and to meet the expectations of his clients, he went into partnership with a firm for further training.

Frank shares his experience, “The training I received through job creation programme motivated me to look outside human physiology. It helped me to discover that I have a passion for other things. It propelled me to discover the real world of independence and gave me the vision of becoming an employer of labour. Before the training, I had thought that to be an entrepreneur, one must be a billionaire, but they taught me that I could start small. With the starter pack, which I call, ‘the brain factor,’ my prospect is excellent. Without the training, I would have been on the streets, looking for non-existent white-collar jobs. I now give what I have (services) to get what I need (money), and this has added value to my life.”

Scoring the job creation programme 85%, he said, “From application to the establishment, I experienced total transparency and a well-organised process. The training was superb and sufficient for any man, graduate, or non-graduate, to prosper. Whoever that does not make it through this programme has his deficiency.”

NAME: AZENUIE ASHINEDU VERA (2016/2017 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: NDOKWA WEST

ENTERPRISE: FASHION & TEXTILE DESIGN

Vera Ashinedu Azenuie is the CEO of Jojo Fashion Empire, Okpanam. Vera was unemployed for four years after graduation as an NCE holder. In the period, the job she got was teaching in a private primary school. The pay was too low that she could hardly make ends meet, but her story changed when she enrolled in the job creation programme.

In her words, “Job creation programme is the best programme for youths. Thousands of youths are beneficiaries, out of which I am one. The programme has exposed me to business networking. I have twenty business partners I collaborate with to meet the demands of clients. It has improved my life immensely. They trained me, but now I am training others. I have trained four persons; two have established their fashion businesses.”

Vera began her fashion business at home after establishment before she could rent a shop in Okpanam. She has grown her business since then and recently secured a Federal Government Loan through NIRSAL Bank to boost her business. Vera is grateful to the Job Creation Office who gave her the platform to participate in the Federal Government Business Clinic for SMEs held in Asaba in 2019. It was the window through which she encountered NIRSAL Bank. “Senator Okowa-led government is trying. I have never benefitted anything from any government





VERA ASHINEDU AZENUIE

before now," she exclaimed.

Rating the job creation programme 90%, she explained that the implementation processes are too organised to be faulted. "They never abandoned me, and I feel loved. I was called during the COVID-19 lockdown and invited to be part of face mask production without stress and on a platter of gold," she added.

She stated that she planned to expand to qualify to become a job creation trainer. She confidently remarked that from the proceeds from her business, she was able to acquire a plot of land in Okpanam in addition to assisting her husband financially towards the upkeep of her home.

NAME: AWIKPEN ITOHAN EUNICE (2018/2019 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: ETHIOPE WEST

ENTERPRISE: HAIRDRESSING, MAKEOVER AND BRAIDING

Eunice Itohan Awikpen holds a BSc in Business Education from the Delta State University, Abraka and is the CEO of Eunice-Tee Beauty Villa. She was unemployed for three years after graduation before she became fortunate to be enrolled in the STEP programme. Though a year in business, yet Eunice-Tee Beauty Villa is everything any beauty-conscious lady would desire in a beauty salon. She furnished her shop tastefully and stocked it full of beauty products. Her enthusiasm at her job speaks volume as evidence of a rewarding career and satisfaction in the choice she made.

She speaks on job creation programme. "The programme has been helpful, and I acquired lots of knowledge during the OPET, EBMT and from my trainer. The training and the establishment with starter pack equipped me for the life of entrepreneurship. I am adhering strictly to tips on how to manage my business, market my products, retain my clients, and keep records. As you



EUNICE ITOHAN AWIKPE

can see, I am just from the Main Market in Onitsha; I have taken stock of my purchases. I never dreamt I could own, manage my own business, expand it, buy more equipment and train others. I have trained eleven people; four have established. Governor Okowa, through the job creation Office, made it possible. Kudos to Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, Prof. Eric Eboh and his wonderful team."

While appraising the programme, she explained that entrepreneurship development is the best policy of the Government. She advocated that the Government should make every youth to acquire skills to help them have legitimate means of livelihood and to become self-reliant. She called for continuity of the programme after Governor Okowa's tenure in office. She scored the programme 95%, describing the implementation process as okay, with a standard starter pack to make any serious-minded youth successful.

She requested for patronage and an opportunity to become a job creation trainer.

NAME: PUPU BLESSING (2017/2018 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: OKPE

ENTERPRISE: FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN

Blessing Pupu, the CEO of NefeWorld Creativity, holds a BSc/ED in Physics. For three years, she was unemployed and had to work as a private school teacher until she enrolled in the job creation STEP. With her starter pack and assistance from family members, she was able to start-up well to attain her present position as a business owner. So far, Blessing has made good progress. She has acquired three manual sewing machines in addition to the industrial sewing machine and industrial weaving machine the State Government gave her. The crown in her achievements include getting married; she now has a baby



BLESSING PUPU

girl. She has two trainees.

Giving kudos to the State Government for the training opportunity and to be part of *STEPpreneurs* invited to participate in the production of face masks, she hoped to be one of the best fashion designers in Warri.

She stated, “Despite the challenge of childbirth and the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, I am getting my clients back. The patronage is good. I want to be like my trainer, Neo Pele. I hope to acquire more equipment and to employ others to help.”

She assessed the Delta State Government’s job creation programme as the best when it comes to youth empowerment. “Compared to other states, Delta State job creation is second to none. I would have remained a private school teacher, but job creation transformed me into a CEO and a business owner. I remain grateful to God, Governor Okowa, Prof Eric Eboh and the entire staff of the job creation office,” she stated.

She scored the programme 80% and appealed to the State Government to extend the duration of training to give the beneficiaries enough time to achieve proficiency in the skills and to support start-ups who are serious in their business to grow. She also called for more intensive monitoring of beneficiaries and easy access to microcredit.

NAME: ALONEI ADJENENE GRACE (2017/2018 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: BURUTU

ENTERPRISE: DECORATION AND EVENT MANAGEMENT

Grace Adjenene Alonei is the CEO of G-Best Rental & Decor, Warri. She holds an NCE in the English Language. She started with 100 plastic chairs, ten tables, one double canopy, two rugs, fabrics, plastic flower vases, ladder as starter pack and N100,000. She has acquired extra four dual canopies, 150 chairs, a



GRACE ADJENENE ALONEI

single canopy and a bridal canopy through the support of her husband. According to her, her husband in appreciation of the State Government’s efforts at tackling unemployment keyed into the vision of Governor Okowa and assisted her to expand her business. Not only that, she has also diversified into the sales of frozen foods stocked in two giant double-door deep freezers.

Grace shares her testimony. “I was unemployed before admission to the STEP programme. The training I received at Songhai Delta, Amukpe gave me the opportunity to know more about business. I am happy being the boss of my own and I am optimistic that my future is bright”.

Speaking on the job creation programme, she said, “The job creation programme is an outstanding initiative. The State should continue to help unemployed youths become gainfully engaged.”

She scored the job creation programme 50%, appealing that the starter pack for beneficiaries in Decoration and Event Management should be improved on to enable the beneficiaries to start well and to withstand competition.

NAME: GERMAN RUKEVWE (2017/2018 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: ETHIOPE EAST

ENTERPRISE: ICT SERVICES

Rukevwe German holds an HND in Electrical Electronics Engineering, and like any young man, his dream was to work in an oil servicing company. He carried his certificate from one oil company to the other, submitting his CV and attending endless interviews that yielded no results. Five years after graduation, fortune came his way when he enrolled in the State Government’s job creation programme. The Job Creation Office established him with an HP laptop, a printer, a generator,

workstation and N50, 000 cash as rent subsidy for his shop. Barely two years after establishment, Rukevwe has made astonishing progress and has diversified into other businesses to have multiple streams of income.

As the CEO of Big GG Communication in Warri, he is an Electrical Engineer, Information and Communication Technologist, laptop/mobile phone technician, accessories merchant, an instructor, a trainer and a point of sales (POS) agent to Zenith Bank. "I am where I am because of the training I received from job creation STEP. Next month I am getting married. I now have a rented apartment; I no longer live with my parents. I have trained three persons; one was for free. I am a graphic designer; I repair laptops and mobile phones, have two POS centres, sell accessories and an instructor at Complete Computer Technology too. The patronage is good. My vision is to own a computer training institute."

He scored the job creation programme 70%, extolling the organisational acumen of the Chief Job Creation Officer, Prof Eric Eboh. He described the staffing as an assemblage of highly resourceful, accessible and dedicated officers who work as a team to ensure the success of the programme, commending their efforts at following-up the beneficiaries and also praying that the programme continues.

"The job creation programme is one of the best things that happened to me. The programme is very credible. I saw it online. I applied and got it without knowing anyone. I pray it continues and those other governors after Senator Okowa will continue with the vision. I see it as a generational vision," he stated.

He appealed to the State Government to help the beneficiaries to have easy access to micro-credit loans to expand their enterprises.



RUKEVWE GERMAN



PROSPER ADIBOR

NAME: **ADIBOR PROSPER** (2018/2019 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: **OKPE**

ENTERPRISE: **SHOE MAKING**

Prosper Adibor has a BSc in Accounting and is the CEO of Prosperity Leather Works, Warri. Though re-trained in Shoe Making in the STEP programme, he had previously acquired knowledge in other aspects of leather works such as making bags, purses, and belts. With his starter pack, Prosper was able to establish a shoe-making shop in Warri and has lots of clients who patronise his products. He received a starter pack containing an industrial sewing machine, filling machine, generator, six lasts, set of knives, one sheet of leather, one sheet of nuran and N50, 000 naira shop rent subsidy. He has been able to acquire one industrial sewing machine and other tools to boost his efficiency.

Prosper shares his experience. "Though challenging, I am making progress. I make bags, shoes, palm sandals and slippers for both male and female. Over time, my capacity has improved, and the patronage and reward are good. I make at least 35% of my investment. Job creation programme made me independent and able to fend for myself. I shall get married next year. I have trained six persons, and two have graduated and become established."

Assessing the programme, he pointed out, "Job creation programme has been of immense help to the youths, and that has made them useful to themselves and families through vocational skills and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training made me what I am. I learnt a lot through the training, and I had the opportunity to meet competent resource persons who inspired me on how to manage and build my business."

He rated the programme 85%, describing it as unbeatable. He commended its processes- screening, organisation,

accommodation, feeding at Songhai Delta, Amukpe, the training and establishment with starter packs. He maintained he has never seen any organisation that implemented such quality of empowerment programme.

He, therefore, appealed to the State Government to do more on the provision of loans to help beneficiaries survive in an unfriendly business environment. "I want to grow, and I need to procure more equipment".

NAME: UTOMI UCHE (2017/2028 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: OSHIMILI SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: CATERING AND CONFECTIONERY

Uche Utomi is the CEO of SammySlice Confectionery located in Asaba and owns a degree in Entrepreneurial Studies from the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Her speciality is the production of confectionery- cakes for all ceremonies, small-chops, eggroll, pizza. Uche is a go-getter and has made remarkable progress within two years of establishment far beyond her start-up package. She has trained ten persons and currently has seven trainees. According to her, the training she received from job creation office under Brown STEP exposed her to ideas and things she never knew while she was with her mentor.

In her words, "Apart from the fact that the Delta State Government trained me in Millicent School of Catering, establishing me with starter packs was the turning point I needed to boost my business. Before then, I was working with my mentor because I had no money to establish myself. After that, I worked from home for a while to raise money to rent this place where I pay N600, 000 naira annually."

She applauded the State Government's Job Creation Scheme, describing it as the motivation she needed to realise that she

could become her boss. "The Orientation and Personal Effectiveness Training (OPET) and the Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training (EBMT) were eye-openers to me on how to manage a business, write a business plan, write a business proposal, access funds and more. I never knew I could own a business and manage it successfully. I can never work for anyone again because I know what I make in a day not to talk of in a year," she enthused.

She proposed the continuation of STEP to enable more unemployed youths to benefit from the programme, appealing to the State Government to patronise her products.

NAME: OPIA ELVIS (2018/2019 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: NDOKWA WEST

ENTERPRISE: ALUMINIUM WORKS

Elvis Opia, the MD of Royal Aluminium, Asaba is an SSCE holder, who ascribed his success to the job creation office. He maintained that he would ever remain grateful to the State Government for providing him with the tools and equipment he needed to begin his enterprise in aluminium works. Being in partnership with a friend who also is in aluminium works, Elvis said he acquired lots of knowledge and business tips through the Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training on how to market his products and care for his clients. He rated the programme 70%, saying, "I can't lie. The programme is good; it has done me well. It has taken lots of youths off the streets by creating gainful employment for them."

He, however, requested for easy access to loans to help him expand his business. "Without finance, one may be seeing the future without tapping into it," he remarked.



UCHE UTOMI



OPIA ELVIS



BLESSING OMEDOMERO

NAME: OMEDOMERO BLESSING (2018/2019 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: ISOKO SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN

Blessing Omedomero is the CEO Domic Stitches, Asaba and has been in business for one year only. Despite that, she has made tremendous progress. Within this period, she has acquired two manual machines, gone into sales of fabrics and has ten trainees and two staff on her payroll. Recounting her experience right from the orientation camp at Songhai Delta, Amukpe, she opined that the job creation programme is the best programme every Government can give to its youths considering the high rate of unemployment in the country. She affirmed achieving much through the programme and that her family is reaping the fruits too.

"My experience with job creation is an interesting one. After graduation in 2014, I was unemployed until I got enrolled in STEP. When the Job Creation Office established me, getting a shop was difficult because I needed a shop close to my home. So, I went into partnership with a friend whose shop is close to my home. I have done great ever since. Though we are recovering from the COVID-19 lockdown, I am happy to say that I am a beneficiary of the COVID-19 Family Support Loan by NIRSAL Bank and it is a boost to my business," she added.

Continuing, "I rate the State Government's job creation programme 90%. Governor Ifeanyi Okowa's Smart Agenda favoured me because I had a smart baby while at the orientation camp at Songhai Delta, Amukpe. I fell into labour at about 1 am and the Job Creation staff took me to Sapele. They were with me until my son arrived by 5 am. They bore every initial expense and provided my baby's first wears. Today, my son is two years, and I cannot forget that singular act of kindness in a hurry."

She described the job creation programme as the best,

applauding the services, training, feeding, staffing and follow-up. In her words, "Job creation is well-coordinated and organised. They are responsive and care for their beneficiaries a lot."

She appealed for state government's patronage of her brand, complaining that she did not participate in the production of face mask.

NAME: ABRAHAM JENNIFER (2018/2019 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: IKA NORTHEAST

ENTERPRISE: HAIRDRESSING, MAKEOVER AND BRAIDING

Jennifer Abraham is an OND holder and the CEO of Treakind's Concept in Asaba. Within a year in business, Jennifer has been able to take her business to an enviable height. Though trained as a Hair Stylist, she has diversified into the sale of footwear, beauty products, jewellery, and lingerie.

According to her, "Before I got enrolled in the job creation programme, I had trained myself in Hairdressing and Makeover, and my trainer was one of the job creation trainers and a beneficiary, but I did not have money to establish myself. Job creation motivated me to come this far in business through the starter pack and the mind-set change through the OPET and EBMT."

While appreciating the State Government for the opportunity, she rated the job creation programme 90%. She said the programme, the follow-up, and implementation processes are excellent.



JENNIFER ABRAHAM

NAME: ENUMA JENNIFER (2016/2017 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: NDOKWA EAST

ENTERPRISE: CATERING AND CONFECTIONERY

Jennifer Enuma holds a BSc in Political Science and is the CEO



JENNIFER ENUMA

of Jenny Joyful Catering Services. She received a Thermacool Deep Freezer, a giant cast aluminium pot, a massive cast aluminium frying pan, double burner industrial gas stove, 12kg gas cylinder, juice mixer, cake mixer, double door medium size oven, non-stick frying pan, potato cutter and N100,000 for shop rent. An enthusiastic Jennifer could not hide her joy as she recounted the benefits of the job creation programme in her family.

Hear her: "The training at Songhai Delta, Amukpe inspired me to be self-independent and to reawaken the entrepreneurial spirit in me. I have achieved many things through catering services. Through it, I was able to renovate my mother's house here in Warri. I work from home for now and receive calls from clients from time to time to cater to their guests. I have trained lots of school children in private schools and Christian women during their churches' conventions."

The job creation programme has improved her standard of living and made many youths to be self-reliant by increasing their capacity to think outside the box. She commended the State Government for sustaining the programme and the entire management and staff of the job creation office for the successful implementation of the programme in the past five years.

"Okowa's Government has been consistent. Consistency is the ability to sustain the programme to date. I appreciate Governor Okowa's tenacity in carrying on with the programme. The job creation staff are doing great; if not many of you would have been posted out and replaced with more competent hands," she reaffirmed.

Scoring the programme 70%, she solicited for the State Government's patronage of her services and products.

NAME: **EJUMI SUCCESS** (2017/2018 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: **UWVIE**

ENTERPRISE: **PRODUCTION OF CLEANING AGENT**

Success Ejumi is an enterprising and energetic young lady whose passion for her business is unequalled. She is the CEO of Triple Star International located in Warri with lots of products to her credit. With her bumper starter pack, success produces wall and car paints, oil paint, petroleum jelly, body cream, tablet soap, body soap, organic soap, car wash, disinfectants, toilet wash, hand sanitiser, chemical, shampoo, hair conditioner and so on. She is in partnership with Horeb Clinic, Warri for whom she produces sanitiser and organic soap. She hopes to begin registration of her products with NAFDAC soon. Besides, she retails chemicals and has trained over 100 persons in the production of cleaning agents. At present, she has five trainees and staff on her payroll.

She shares her experience, "I am still building my business. I have bought more equipment, and I hope that by the time I finish with that, I shall begin the formalities of registering my products with NAFDAC. My works, Triple Star Int'l, are in high demand. Once taken to the market, none returns them home. I produce hand sanitisers and organic soap for Horeb Clinic, Warri. Other cleaning agent producers flock to my house to buy chemicals.

As you can see, I just made an order for goods worth about half a million from Lagos. I am expecting the supply soon. The production of the cleaning agent is rewarding because the market is there."

Success, so happy with her establishment by the State Government, described the job creation programme as, "The ability to make money without a white-collar job." She said the programme trained her to become independent, self-employed



SUCCESS EJUMI

and on how to keep a record of her stock and sales daily. She rated the programme 80%, stressing, “Job creation programme made me a trainer, and as a result, many persons are no longer jobless; we have touched many lives.”

She appealed to the State Government to create a more accessible opportunity for beneficiaries to access soft loans to grow their businesses.

NAME: UGHELLI PRISCA (2017/2018 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: UDU

ENTERPRISE: FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN

Prisca Ughelli is a Business Administration graduate but was unemployed for two years. She is the CEO of P & G Fashion Houze, Warri. She enrolled in the State Government’s job creation programme as a Brown STEP who had previously trained herself in the fashion business. Having undergone a six weeks refresher course in Fashion and Textile Design at the training centre of her posting, the Job Creation Office established her in February 2018. She opened her business in March 2018. Barely four months after establishment, she bought four manual sewing machines and enrolled three apprentices who graduated after one year. Currently, Prisca has three trainees and has opened another fashion outlet at Eket-Inland that one of her successful trainees’ manages. Most remarkably, the Udu Local Government Council appointed her as one of the trainers for its empowerment programme for young girls 18 years and above.

She stated, “I am enjoying the fashion life. The starter pack was a boost to my shop as it placed me on a higher class above my competitors. It added glamour to my brand as most of them do not have industrial machines and a generator. Any client who comes to my shop feels comfortable to do business with me. To crown it all, Udu Local Government Council has appointed me as a trainer because of my job creation certificate tagged, ‘Delta State Government, Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer.’ The programme has changed the lives of many youths. So many young people could afford to learn to acquire a skill, but the challenge is how to establish.”

“Job Creation Office made it easier for me. They not only established me. They trained me to broaden my knowledge and scope of the fashion industry and on entrepreneurship. I am a testifier. I am no longer in the labour market. I no longer engage myself in menial jobs as some graduates are doing, working as fuel attendants in fuel stations.”

She appreciated Governor Okowa, Prof. Eric Eboh and the entire staff of the Office of the Chief Job Creation Office. She emphasised that the job creation programme is well-packaged, taking the beneficiaries progressively from one activity to the other until the end with the establishment with the starter pack.



PRISCA UGHELLI WITH ONE OF HER TRAINEES

She lauded the follow-up mechanism, the calls, good flow of information and the COVID-19 contract of face mask production the Government gave STEP beneficiaries in Fashion and Textile Design. She made one thousand face masks. “The production of face mask provided food for me during the lockdown. Meanwhile, my competitors weren’t making money. Job creation calls make me feel special,” she enthused.

She rated the programme 70%, hoping to qualify to be one of its trainers soon.

NAME: EGONU GLADYS (2018/2019 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: OSHIMILI SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN

Gladys Egonu was unemployed for three years after graduation from the Niger Delta University where she obtained a BSc in



GLADYS EGONU

Political Science. She had a sewing machine with which she worked at home before she enrolled in the job creation programme. She is the CEO of G6 Design, Asaba. After establishment with starter pack, she acquired a manual sewing machine through her family in addition to the two industrial devices, a generator, and other components of the starter pack by Government. Just a year in business, Gladys has trained four persons. Her vision is to become a world-class fashion designer.

She speaks about the programme. “The training improved my ability to finish well. My work speaks for me. So many youths want to train under me, but I cannot accept them because of space. The Delta State job creation programme has helped to reduce unemployment, reduce crime, and has helped many youths to realise their true potentials. It brought out the creativity in me, and through it, I have been able to achieve financial freedom. So many beneficiaries are now independent; we can take care of ourselves, help our families and chart the way forward for a better future. In a nutshell, job creation programme has shaped the mind-set of Delta youths. I can attest to that fact. The programme is an incredibly good platform, and it is my wish that it continues. The exposure it gave me shot me up to where I am today. I love what I do, though I do not have time for myself.”

She appealed to the Government to make the programme more accessible to unemployed youths. She scored the programme 80%, stating that the process is excellent right from the screening to the establishment with starter packs. She applauded Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for the opportunity and for the monitoring mechanism put in place to track the beneficiaries.

NAME: EBENUWA AWELE MERCY (2017/2018 CYCLE-BROWN STEP)

LGA: OSHIMILI SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: CATERING AND CONFECTIONERY

Awele Mercy Eбенуwa is CEO of Awilla Treat, Asaba and practises both Catering and Confectionery unlike so many of her counterparts who practise either of the two. She has an OND in Insurance. Mercy was unemployed for three years, but enrolment in the Job Creation Programme took her out of the labour market. She had worked from home for one year after establishment with starter pack before she was able to save enough money to rent a shop of N250, 000 annually. She fills fulfilled working for herself.

“The training I received from STEP took me out of the labour market. The Orientation and Personal Effectiveness Training and the Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training were extraordinarily rich. They exposed me to record-keeping, good customer care and business management. I cannot forget the lecture on customer care by the CEO of Signature Secrets. I no longer depend on anybody. Catering and confectionery are



MERCY AWELE EBENUWA

rewarding and lucrative. So far, I have trained two persons.”

While rating the programme 99%, she lauded its implementation process. She advised other youths who have not benefited to key into it, praying that governments after Governor Okowa would continue with the vision.

NAME: EDEOGHO BENJAMIN (2016/2017 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: ISOKO NORTH

ENTERPRISE: TILING

Benjamin EDEOGHO is a Sociology graduate. He had worked as a banker with two microfinance banks before he enrolled in the STEP programme. His tiling skill has taken him around the whole of the Niger Delta Region to execute projects which have been quite rewarding. For health challenges and waist pain associated with floor tiling, he diversified to the production of polythene bags, though he still executes tiling projects occasionally. Oghene-Leno Polythenes, Asaba, his business name, produces all kinds of polythene bags such as big handless bags, small handless bags, cellophane nylon of all sizes and customised nylon bags which he sells to wholesalers only. He had to humble himself to acquire the skill in Production of Polythene bags in Onitsha from his “Oga” who did not go to school. Ben is a hard worker as his daily routine spans between 8 am to 10 pm depending on orders from his clients. He feels fulfilled working for himself, being able to pay his bills and



BENJAMIN EDEOGHO

provide for his family.

Hear him, “The OPET and the EBMT experiences gave me the idea of what challenges are in business and how not to give up no matter the obstacles. From my savings as a banker and tiling, I procured the equipment for my polythene business with about ₦1.5m. Job creation programme has placed smiles on the faces of so many serious-minded youths who know what they want out of life. It taught us how to be self-reliant and how to create jobs for ourselves in the face of unemployment in this country. I run my business with my family, so I do not need an employee yet. I was married before I enrolled in the job creation programme, so I have been able to care for my family through my proceeds. I have also acquired a 100 X 100 plot of land in Ozoro. I appreciate the Delta State Government for the follow-up and for continuing with the programme. It is my prayer that governments after Governor Okowa continues with the programme”.

While rating the programme excellent, he appealed to the State Government to make the application forms more accessible to every unemployed youth.

NAME: **ONIANWA AZUKA FRANKLYN** (2017/2018 CYCLE-GREEN STEP)

LGA: **OSHIMILI SOUTH**

ENTERPRISE: **POP, SCREED-MAKING AND PAINTING**

Franklyn Azuka Onianwa is an SSCE holder. Since establishment with Starter Pack, he has been able to use the proceeds from his

business engagements to provide for his aged-widowed father, siblings and to sponsor his education at National Teacher's Institute (NTI), Asaba Chapter where he is studying the English Language.

Hear him, “My job has been rewarding and favourable. It has exposed me to lots of people and places. I engage in fixing of window hood, moulding, and dressing of PoP of all types, screed-making and recently I diversified to painting to increase my income and opportunities. The huge responsibility of providing for my aged father and siblings was made easier because of the opportunity Governor Okowa gave to me. Job creation programme made way for me when there was no way.”

Describing the programme as phenomenally prosperous, he stated that it had created job opportunities for

so many youths, given them an easy platform to acquire skills and to go into business instead of idling away looking for a white-collar job. He called for continuity of the programme even when Governor Okowa leaves office and for easy access to microcredit to begin the sales of PoP, screed, and paint materials to boost his income.



AZUKA FRANKLYN ONIANWA

YAGEP

Testimonials



AKPODUADO

'My Target Is to Have 100,000 Fish in My Farm,' Says Akpoduado

BY FIDELIS EGUGBO

FARMING is certainly, not a job that is restricted to the uneducated. Before the emergence of Senator (Dr.) Ifeanyi Okowa as the Governor of Delta State in 2015, most graduates across the country shied away from agriculture. They saw agriculture as a business that should be

left solely for the uneducated.

Unfortunately for most of the graduates, the civil service from the federal to the local government levels are bloated with workers, most of them having little to do. Again, the private sector could not absorb the graduates looking for white collar jobs and for those fixated on getting employed in the oil industry, it is a fact that the sector employed the least number of workers in the country.

So, a lot of people, despite having the potentials, were idle until Governor Okowa created the Job Creation Office and handed it over to a University don, Prof. Eric Eboh, to man.

It is no longer news that the Job Creation Office did not only create jobs for teeming Deltans but has made those it has empowered to be employers of labour.

One of such persons is Mr. Mayor Joel Akpoduado, a graduate of English, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

He and his wife graduated from AAU in 2007 and for about a decade, were submitting their curriculum vitae and writing series of application letters for jobs that apparently were non-existent until Senator Okowa's emergence as the Governor of Delta State.

His case was unique as he never doubted Governor Okowa's 'prosperity for all Deltans' agenda and immediately the forms came out for YAGEP programme, he applied and was among the lucky ones to be enlisted in 2015.

"I was enlisted for YAGEP training in 2015 and was equipped in 2016 with 2,000 fishes and at present, we have more than 15,000 fishes.

"My fish farm is at Jeddo, Okpe Local Government Area and I also have in Ugbokodo-Okpe. There is a huge market for fish.

"I graduated in 2007 and was jobless till Governor Okowa came to assist me; I am now an employer of labour. Yes, people are working in my farms.

"I am from Uduophori Town, Patani Local Area and I can comfortably say that this business is viable, profitable and risky because there are lots of challenges which is normal in any business.

"I have been adequately trained to mitigate against the risks. My plan is continuous expansion, and to employ more workers, so that my farm can become a training centre.

"With N20 million funding, my plan is to expand to about 100,000 fish capacity, purchase farm produce equipment, among others. I am sure that in a year, I will be able to pay back if it comes in form of loan.

"Dr. Okowa is a Governor of the people, he came on board and promised jobs for the youth, and he fulfilled the promise by creating the office of the Chief Job Creation,

headed by Prof. Eric Eboh.

"Thousands of us were empowered in different sectors of which I am a beneficiary

"My company is now registered with the CAC and I pay my tax to the Delta State Board Of Internal Revenue Service."

It was a true story of someone that has been inspired to look at a better tomorrow and Mayor believes that he will stick to the fish business based on his experience.



EJOMERIONA

'Through YAGEP, My Fish Farm Will Keep Expanding' - Ejomeriona

Tucked in a corner of Oleh, Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State, is a fish farm owned by Miss Anita Ejomeriona.

A graduate from the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Ejomeriona studied Mathematics and Statistics in 2014, a year before Governor Ifeanyi Okowa assumed office.

She can be described as someone who is among the lucky ones, as she did not stay for so long without getting a job.

After her graduation, she started a fish farm and with the assistance of YAGEP, she can boast of more than 3,000 fishes in her farm.

"I was in N-Power but, I can say that I am doing much better now. I have people who are working for me.

"I cannot leave this business even when I get a better option, my plan is to make more money and expand.

"Governor Okowa tried for us, and we will continue to pray for him."

'YAGEP's Assistance Is the Best Thing That Happened to Me' - Ayrakwa

Miss Ivy Nana Ayrakwa is a beneficiary of the Delta State Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP).

In an interview with OkowaPlus, she explained how assistance from the Delta State government, through the Job Creation Office gave a boost to her poultry business. Excerpt:

"I am Ivy Nana Ayrakwa, I am from Oyede in Isoko North local government area of Delta State.

"I started my poultry business with 25 birds in September 2016. I was in school then at Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku where I studied Business Administration.

"While in school, I was aware of what the Job Creation Office was doing, how they were assisting people to own their businesses, but I did not apply till after my youth service.

"I did my National Service under the NYSC in Nasarawa State in



AYRAKWA

2018. During that time, my mother, Mrs Rose Ayrakwa, was assisting me to manage the poultry. Till date, she still renders assistance to me, and my father was not against what I was doing.

"I was born here in Ibusa and people around here are very supportive, there is no offensive smell from the poultry because, we clean it regularly.

"I already had a battery cage before I went for service and when I returned, I continued but, I never made it to 100 birds till the Job Creation Office came to my assistance early this year.

"With the assistance of the state government, I increased my birds to 500 and I can tell you that I am not idle. I am not also looking for job because, I am very very busy managing my poultry.

"I have broilers, noilers, and turkey.

"I had a little setback when I lost 120 birds. I thought there was something that I was not doing right but, when I asked others that got the same stock with me, they were also, experiencing the same problem. That was the only time that I lost so many birds at a stretch.

"It is not very tasking, I like the challenge, it is interesting, and I need more assistance to expand, to have my own brooding pen.

"The assistance from Governor Ifeanyi Okowa is the best thing that happened to me. I have always aimed at having my own poultry after school.

"The governor is really interested in assisting the youths and if not for the assistance, maybe I will still be having 50 or 75 birds, but with government assistance, I have more than 500 birds.

"I am not thinking of going into another business, it is all about agriculture for me and I want to expand."

'Nothing Should Stop YAGEP Programme' - Mr And Mrs Emanerame

There is nothing as good as a flourishing business. This is evident in the joy of Mr and Mrs Ochuko Emanerame as they witness growth in their business through the assistance of the Delta State Job Creation Office.



EMANERAME

Speaking with OkowaPlus at their fish farm located in the cluster at Jeddo, Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State, they observed that but, for the assistance of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa's prosperity agenda which came to them through the YAGEP, it was possible that they would have still been in the starting stage of their business.

To Ochuko, as he would like to be addressed, he thought the empowerment programme was mainly meant for members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

He was a staunch member of the opposition political party and his first two attempts to secure space in the training programme was unsuccessful. This reinforced his earlier belief that the programme was political until his third attempt which led to his invitation and subsequent empowerment.

"I am from Effurun in Uvwie local government area. I got to know about YAGEP through advertorials on the radio and television; I am a strong critic of the PDP government and I thought all that they were doing were just politics.

"I applied for the programme twice and when I was not taken, I said it was proof that what they were doing was political and it was all about who you know to make case for you.

"But I did not give up. I made another attempt and surprisingly, I was invited and today, I can attest that what Governor Okowa is doing is genuine. Our Governor is a realistic man and I can tell anybody anywhere that Governor Okowa is not playing politics like other people.

"I and my wife have benefited from the programmes and what we are looking at now is more money for expansion.

"I am a graduate of Lead City University, Ibadan, where I studied Computer Information Science and did my post-graduate diploma at Hertfordshire University, United Kingdom in International Business.

"My wife is a graduate of Mathematics from the Delta State

University, Abraka.

"We met here in this cluster farm and got married last year.

"These projects are good for the people; they are taking a lot of people out of the jobless market and our prayer is that the projects should continue."

During the interview, the wife was beaming with smiles of contentment and she disclosed that though, she had been trained by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), what she got from Governor Okowa administration in terms of training, equipment and mentoring is unique.

"As my husband told you, we got married as farmers; I had NDDC training on fishery and got empowered too by YAGEP.

"YAGEP is very good, I must say. It is one of the best projects that I involved myself with and it should be encouraged to continue."

Already, the couple is diversifying into poultry, rearing of goats, among others. They have strong belief that there is a lot of money to be made from agriculture and their plan is to continue to acquire more land and expand in the business.

'I Have More Than 70 Pregnant Pigs' - Okafor

One area that many people did not consider so much is pig farming.

Pig farms are very lucrative because, a single pig has the capacity to give birth to as much as 10 to 12 piglets in a single birth, making it one of the most reproducing livestock in the world. They can also produce two times in a year under an ideal pig management practice.

And a lot of persons were trained on how to engage in pig farming.

At Ugbolu, Oshimili North local government area of Delta State lives one of the beneficiaries of the YAGEP programmes of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa's administration.

28-year old Okafor graduated from the University of Benin and during his National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) in 2016 at Ibadan, he ventured into pig business.

On completion of his NYSC, he came back to Delta and through YAGEP, his pig business got a boost. At present, he has more than 70 pigs that are pregnant.

Okafor who hails from Ute-Okpu in Ika North-East Local

Government Area of the state, stated that the YAGEP programme has made him to be independent to a large extent.

He disclosed that he presently has workers in his farm and from the proceeds from his farm, he has completed his master's degree and presently, studying for his Ph.D.

"I am very happy today that I have never been jobless.

"During my NYSC, I started with three pigs in 2016, but now, I have more than 70 pigs that are pregnant.

"I got to know about YAGEP through a friend and I followed the procedure and we were given ten pigs.

"The assistance from YAGEP helped us to expand. Micro-credit also gave us loan and I can tell you that the money from YAGEP came at a very critical period, and we have the state government to thank for assisting us.

"This farm is keeping me busy and has given me time and opportunity to do so many things.

"Because of farming, I had the time for my Masters and presently, I am doing my Ph.D in UNIBEN.

"I have three workers and I believe it is going to grow. I got the land that I am using for the farm on lease.

"I want to have a farm of international standard where we can also train the youths, a sort of training institute where youths can come and train on piggyery to enable them be on their own.

"Entrepreneurship is the key, I am not looking for job for now.

"Mortality rate is at the barest minimum because pigs are rugged animals. They can survive in harsh conditions."



OKAFOR

'I Am A Graduate of Computer Science, But I'm Happy To Be A Fish Farmer' - Okpala

The case of Mr. Chukwunalu Anthony Okpala is a peculiar one.

Okpala, a graduate of Computer Science from the Delta State University, Abraka, thought getting to be trained and equipped by the Job Creation Office would require a lot of contacts or political influence. So, he did not bother to apply, but, got himself attached to those who have already acquired the entrepreneurial skill who are sponsored by the state government.

He was aspiring to be like his father, Mr Gilbert Okpala, a computer expert who retired from the Delta Printing and Publishing Company Limited, publishers of *The Pointer*, but getting civil service job was not easy.

He attached himself to one Mr Chinwike Nwankwo who was trained and equipped in fish production by the Job Creation Office.

After acquiring the skills, he set up his own fish farm and unknown to him, the Job Creation Office got hint about his desire and came to his assistance.

Presently, he has more than 1,000 fish in his farm, located in the heart of Asaba, the Delta State capital.

He said, "I am a happy man today, the Delta State government

through the Job Creation Office has empowered me to be on my own. I have my fishponds and also engage in consultancy service, so, I am not jobless.

"I started this business three years ago and from the proceeds, I got married this year (2020).

"I am from Umutu in Ukwuani Local Government Area. I trained under a YAGEPpreneur and with assistance from family and friends, I started my fish business. My business got a boost when I received support from the Delta State government through the Job Creation Office," he said.

Asked if he has any regret going into the business, he said, "no regret at all, I sell my fish when they are 1 kg; I have some that are more than 1 kg presently .

"My worst experience was when I stocked 2,000 fish for a start and lost 1,200. I did not give up because I got my training from a fish farmer who is still in the business.

"My desire is to have a larger farm and diversify into other areas because, the water from the fishpond is very rich for agriculture, I also cultivate tomatoes."

'Okowa Gave Us Hope' - Onah

When you look around and you have no one to sponsor your educational needs, and in the process of staying, hoping that a good samaritan will take up the sponsorship, you now have extra mouth to feed by having a wife and children, then, you know what it means to seek the face of God.

You have already lost your father who was the breadwinner of the family, your mum cannot cater for your educational needs as there are other siblings to cater for. So, all can you do is to hope in God, believing that with Him, there can still be open doors.

Yes, God still answers prayers in miraculous ways and the story of Ijeoma Onah, an Ordinary National Diploma graduate in Mechanical Engineering, from Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, the coming of YAGEP was a great relief.

His plans were to go for his Higher National Diploma or switch to the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun for further studies, but there was nobody to assist him financially.

Though, he got his OND in 2010, he was doing menial jobs and, got involved in farming until assistance from YAGEP came his ways.





Going to his farm at Abam Camp, Umuseti, Utagba-Uno in Ndokwa West Local Government Area was not an easy one as the earth road has been flooded.

Market women seen on the road would easily tell you not to drive further as the road has been flooded due to rainfall. But Onah was optimistic, believing that that assistance from YAGEP will lift him from financial challenges.

He disclosed that he got to know about YAGEP through one of his relations working in the Ministry of Agriculture and was lucky to be among those listed for assistance.

"The money they gave to me, assisted me in buying plantain suckers for two acres of land. Governor Okowa has given us hope of a better tomorrow.

"My farm was less than one acre before the assistance from YAGEP came.

"My prayer is that flood will not affect my production, as the plantain are yet to bear fruits.

"I have been in the business for more than two years, I am married with children.

"The money that came was a great relief and I thank God for bringing Governor Okowa for us.

Although Ona hopes that the flood-prone nature of the area his farm will not affect his plantains. He also hopes to relocate his farm to an area not prone to flooding in subsequent years.

'With YAGEP, Okowa Has Changed My Status' - Onobruhere

The story of Sylvester Oborirhovo Onobruhere is an interesting one.

A graduate of Agricultural Engineering of Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Onobruhere started his business in 2007.

To him, it was just about fish, mainly for consumption, but with the coming of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa in 2015, he moved into poultry business and he is proud to say that he just sold 600 birds.

He said, "in 2007, I started my fish business, then it was just to breed and sell, but, presently, due to the assistance of Governor Okowa, I just sold 600 birds and I still have 300 left.

"Our Governor really tried for us, especially me and my family. My business is doing very well, and it has changed the status of my family.

My wife, Caroline, a graduate of Safety Engineering, Petroleum Training Institute (PTI), Effurun, is assisting me because there is no other job.

"We are expanding with proceeds from the poultry, we have goats and ducks believing that we will expand into a bigger farm with time.

"We have three children and as you can see, we are also trying to build our house with proceeds from the business.

"Please, salute Okowa for us, he has done very well for our family. There was no job before Governor Okowa empowered me through YAGEP and I am enjoying it today, because from this business, I am feeding my family, and training my children.

"Our prayer is to get more financial assistance to enable us expand."



Partnership that works

STEP Trainers reflect on their experiences and how the collaboration with the State Government is impacting the economy

BY JONATHAN ONWUKA

Hajia Abdulkadiri Sekinah, Manager, Glamour Beauty Salon, Asaba

The Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) under the Job Creation Office is a well thought out idea by the Delta State Governor, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa. It has taken thousands of youths out of the streets and given them the opportunity to be trained and established to earn their livelihood, and at the same time become employers of labour. It must be emphasized that beneficiaries were not only trained but were equally given starter packs and money to rent shops. I must commend the government for the bold initiative and pray that subsequent administrations will sustain this laudable programme.

I had a wonderful experience with the trainees who showed enthusiasm and commitment during their training. I am particularly happy for the creation of the Monitoring and Mentorship Directorate, which has the responsibility to mentor beneficiaries of the job creation programme. Their activities have helped in guiding and ensuring that graduates of the programme remain focused in building their businesses.



HAJIA ABDULKADIRI SEKINAH, MANAGER, GLAMOUR BEAUTY SALOON, ASABA

Abonyi Okechukwu, MD Respect and Sons Technical, Asaba

Our partnership with the Delta State Government in job creation has been most rewarding. The programme, from my observation, has indeed given hope to many youths across the state who probably had lost hope for better future. That perhaps explains the



MR ABONYI OKECHUKWU, MD, RESPECT AND SONS TECHNICAL, ASABA

commitment the participants exhibited throughout the duration of the programme. Many of them were eager to learn.

Government on its part was very sincere in seeing to the success of the programme. Funds and

materials were made available, which contributed to the success of the exercise. Everything needed for the training was provided by the State Government. In fact, we did not lack anything. And this made us to put in great effort and ensure that participants received the best training.

I will not fail to commend and appreciate the State Government for giving us the opportunity to be part of the move to empower youths in the state. Their being empowered has no doubt added value to the socio-economic development of the state.

Mrs Ifeajika, Nerissa Olisa, CEO, Honey Drops Global Ventures, Asaba

The job creation initiative of the Delta State Government has given hope to the less privileged. It is not about who you know; it is simply about grace and the zeal to learn and better one's life. The youths are being given opportunity to make meaning out of their lives with detailed training and starter packs provided for them by government.

The response of beneficiaries was awesome. It encouraged me as a trainer to put in my best in impacting needed knowledge. I was, however, lucky to have the kind of students I had. I had what I would call, mother/children relationship with them. It was wonderful. They were eager to learn. In just eight weeks into their training, many of

them had started getting jobs from clients. From their comments they are grateful to the governor. In fact, the mother of one of my trainees called me one day to appreciate the governor. The woman was overwhelmed by what she termed, the generosity of the governor.

I want to say a big thank you to the governor. I pray God to take him beyond his dreams. The way he has continued to change the lives of Deltans, particularly the youths is so amazing. He has indeed touched many lives.

Asindu, Bridget, *Proprietor, BRIJTOPNET International Academy, Asaba*

I must confess that I am privileged to be one of the trainers of the beneficiaries of the STEP programme. I recently relocated from Canada where I spent 26 years of my life. While abroad, I diligently followed Governor Okowa's programmes and his efforts to change the narrative in the governance of Delta State in his first tenure. And because I had the conviction, he was going to come back for a second tenure, I started planning to return home to be part of his success story. Immediately I got back, I plugged myself into the job creation programme. I went to their office on my own to request that I become part of the team. I was given a warm reception by the Job Creation Officer, Prof. Eric Eboh, who immediately incorporated me into the programme, seeing my strong desire to make my input in the empowerment of the youths.

I would like to say without any doubt that the job creation programme is one of the greatest achievements of the Okowa led administration. It has opened opportunities for our youths to be gainfully engaged in different vocations. A lot of the youths who are beneficiaries are doing great.

The programme



MRS NERISSA OLISA-IFEAJIKA,
CEO HONEYDROP GLOBAL VENTURES

has created a pool of young entrepreneurs who in their own ways are contributing to the socio-economic advancement of the state. Every community across the state has been affected positively.

It wasn't difficult teaching the students as they were very willing to learn. It made my job easy. I taught them how to make dresses that could meet international standards, as a way of giving them opportunity to access the international market soon. Indeed, I had wonderful experiences with the participants.

I am one of the ambassadors of the programme, and a mentor. I am always involved in the activities of the job creation office.

I keep praying for the governor for God to help him finish strong. I call on all Deltans to continue to support the administration to make our state better.

Echenim, Faith Onyekachi, *Proprietor, Pistis Place and Events, Asaba*

I have been with the job creation office for about three years as one of the trainers in the STEP programme. The programme has given many youths in the state the opportunity to be their own boss. It has helped in reducing unemployment in the state. I commend the government for the wonderful initiative. Those beneficiaries who I trained are doing great as I take out time to monitor their progress.

The experiences I had with them in the last three years showed that many youths are ready to take up skills acquisition to improve their living conditions. I equally enjoyed good working relationship with the job creation office. They have always encouraged us in the discharge of our assignments.

While impacting the right knowledge, we also talk to beneficiaries on the need to be serious, and ensure they make proper use of the starter packs given to them by the state government.

Post proficiency tests are carried out on the students to know their level of understanding, and to see if they are ready to begin their journey in entrepreneurship before stater packs and money are given to them by the state government.

I am hoping that more opportunities would be created so that many more youths will benefit.

I really



BRIDGET ASINDU, PROPRIETOR,
BRIJTOPNET INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY, ASABA



MRS FAITH ONYEKACHI ECHENIM, PROPRIETOR,
PISTIS PLACE AND EVENTS, ASABA

commend the efforts of the governor. He is doing very well for the state.

Mrs Tina Alex Chukwutem, Operations Manager, Angelo Food Chicken Court, Agbor

The big take for me is the joy derived from being given the opportunity to share knowledge of my vocation with the youths. Going back to the class created a lot of excitement for me. Being a trainer helped also to improve my knowledge in my area of interest, food and nutrition. The experience was wonderful.

The programme is laudable. Taking youths off the streets and empowering them to become employers is a great achievement.

Also, the students were willing to learn. Every time I needed them; they were readily available to undertake practical assignments. The last set was wonderful. Their level of commitment was very high.

They are all doing well. And it gives me joy knowing they are establishing themselves gradually and steadily.

I want to plead with the state government to extend allotted time for training for the benefit of slow learners.

I give the governor kudos for giving the youths the opportunity which many of us didn't have.

Oghenerure, Israel Aremiunu, Proprietor, Asrael Computer Training School, Oleh

My relationship with the Job Creation Office which started in 2015 has been one of mutual benefits. I was lucky to be among the first trainers recruited by the agency to train our youths on skill acquisition.

While training participants, I was able to expand my knowledge. You can see that it was not only the students that benefitted, but the trainers equally gained tremendously from the programme. The interaction with the trainees and their quest to learn made me to read more, and do a lot of research, and that helped in no small measure in broadening my knowledge.

I must sincerely thank the Job Creation Officer, Prof. Eric Eboh, for the introduction of the Proficiency Test to ascertain the level of understanding of the trainees before starter packs were given to them. It made the students to be more serious with their training. Knowing that the



MRS TINA ALEX CHUKWUTEM, OPERATIONS MANAGER, ANGELO FOOD CHICKEN COURT, AGBOR



ISRAEL AREMIUNU OGHENERURE, MD, ASRAEL COMPUTER TRAINING SCHOOL, OLEH

chances of getting starter packs was partly dependent on how well one performs in the Proficiency Test made them more focused and committed.

I want to use this opportunity to appreciate Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for the

laudable initiative. There is no doubt that the programme has impacted greatly on our dear state, contributing immensely to creation of jobs, and boosting the socio-economic development of the state.

Pastor Johnson Unuafe, MD, John Afe & Sons Nigeria Enterprises, Kwale, Ukwuani Local Government Area

For me, vocational training and skills acquisition by the youths should be the major focus of any government that truly wants to lift its citizens out of poverty. Governor Okowa, without argument, has scored an A in this regard. Instead of waiting endlessly for the elusive white-collar jobs, the youths in Delta State are gradually and steadily being turned into entrepreneurs who are creating job opportunities for others. This is a very commendable policy initiative by the Okowa-led administration.

I derive joy in teaching and impacting my knowledge of welding and fabrication in our youths. Those that I have

taught in the last three years showed tremendous eagerness to learn. They were very grateful to the governor for giving them the opportunity to acquire skills and be business owners.

The socio-economic benefits of this



PASTOR JOHNSON UNUAFE, MD, JOHN AFE AND SONS NIGERIA ENTERPRISES, KWALE

programme to our dear state cannot be overemphasized. When the youths are well taken care of by way of sustainable empowerment, the natural gain is that the socio-economic development of the society is enhanced. And that is what the government is doing. And I say kudos to Governor Okowa.

Sustaining the Job Creation Model By Law

Introduction

The credible way to mirror the performance and impacts of an organisation, agency or programme is through the looking glass of stakeholder feedback. From a programme implementation perspective, feedback refers to information, responses, assessments, perceptions and impressions about the conduct, functioning, performance and impacts of a programme. In our case, this is provided by job creation programme stakeholders including direct beneficiaries (trainees and start-ups), programme actors such as support staff, trainers and resource persons as well as those who benefit from or are affected by the performance/impact of the programme including business community, local communities, civic organisations and the public.

The feedback from programme stakeholders is a vital input for programme self-assessment, self-correction, and cumulative learning by programme managers. Combining stakeholder feedback and its proper utilization by programme managers forms the veritable basis for continued relevance, credibility, legitimacy, impact, and sustainability of the programme. A programme's learning curve matched with the willingness and ability of programme managers to digest and internalize the lessons from stakeholders' feedback is crucial in shaping progressive performance. Feedback from stakeholders fosters openness, engenders transparency, and

by **Prof. Eric Eboh**
Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer



deepens ownership of a programme. Likewise, it helps to build confidence between programme implementers, beneficiaries, target population, stakeholders, and the public.

In addition to its utility for cumulative improvements of a programme, regular stakeholder feedback is crucial for taking ownership and creating demand for programme continuity and sustainability. A classic example of how stakeholder commendation can crystallize into institutional framework of programme continuity and sustainability is the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau Law. The making of the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau Law is the culmination of stakeholder approvals

of the job creation programmes – Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) and Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP). In fact, the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau Law is the outcome of expressed demand by various stakeholders for the continuity and sustainability of the job creation programme through enactment into a Law.

The birth of Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer: A review of developments leading to the enactment of the Law is important for understanding and appreciating the legendary trajectory of events. The Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer was created by His Excellency, Senator Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, Governor of Delta State, in June 2015 in line with his

avowed vision to productively and gainfully engage the youth of Delta State for self-employment under the S.M.A.R.T. Agenda. The office was mandated to conceptualize, plan, design, implement and coordinate youth-targeted job creation programmes in Delta State, bearing in mind the policy goal of tackling youth unemployment by harnessing youth entrepreneurship together with diversifying the state's economy for wealth creation outside the oil sector.

The office started from “ground zero”. Since there was no antecedent framework, the Office initiated an appropriate organizational structure, developed a corporate brand, and recruited operational and administrative staff from within the Civil Service in the State. Based on the background studies, stakeholder consultations and programme advisories by the Transition Committee during April-May 2015, and given the need to roll out job creation programmes within the shortest possible time, the office under the leadership and direction of the Governor, formulated two job creation programmes - Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) and Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP). The objective of both programmes is to mobilize, train, equip and support unemployed youths (18-35 years old) with the technical know-how, vocational skills, values, and resources to become self-employed as entrepreneurs. The organizational brand was hinged on integrity, discipline, diligence, excellence and focus on results.

From programme results through stakeholder feedback to the Law: Beginning from 2015, the job creation programmes have lived up to stakeholders' expectations, countering initial cynicism. Through empirical evidence about the relevance and quality of service delivery, integrity of programme implementation, discipline and credibility of the programme elements, the approval and ratings by stakeholders (political leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, etc.) increased in depth and breadth. The situation elicited stakeholder unanimity to make the job creation programmes sustainable into the future. It was reasoned that the sure way to ensure continuity and sustainability is to

institutionalize the Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer by means of a legal framework.

Consequently, at the commencement of the second tenure of his administration, the Governor sent an Executive Bill to the Delta State House of Assembly, for a Law to establish the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau. After due consideration, the Delta State House of Assembly passed the Executive Bill into Law on the 22nd of August 2019. The Bill was assented to by the Governor on the 5th of September 2019. In line with the statutory requirement, the Gazette of the Law was published as Law No. 11 of 2019 on the 12th of September 2019, as Gazette Vol. 29 No. 37, 2019.

Functions of Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau: The functions of the Bureau, as provided for by the Law, are:

- i. Design, plan and execute job and wealth creation programmes, projects and initiatives aimed at curbing youth unemployment, including training for skills acquisition, entrepreneurship development, start-up, establishment and economic empowerment of youths in various vocational, technical and agricultural enterprises and businesses;
- ii. Facilitate, organize, coordinate and provide capacity building and specialist services for job and wealth creation programmes, projects and initiatives including training for skills acquisition, entrepreneurship development, start-up, establishment and economic empowerment of youths in vocational, technical and agricultural enterprises and businesses;
- iii. Streamline, coordinate and standardize job and wealth creation plans, programmes, projects and initiatives for curbing youth unemployment in the state to ensure proper focus, harmony, effectiveness and impacts;
- iv. Find, secure and execute job and wealth creation programme and project partnership, collaboration, cooperation, linkages and networking with international and national organisations and agencies as well as

The Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau Law is the outcome of expressed demand by various stakeholders for the continuity and sustainability of the Job Creation programme through enactment into law.

private sector bodies, community-based organisations and civil society organisations;

- v. Plan, design and execute any other employment and wealth creation programmes and initiatives, economic empowerment schemes, development intervention projects and activities for curbing youth unemployment, as may be directed by the Governor, from time to time.
- vi. Collect, collate and document a data bank of unemployed, under-unemployed and fully employed persons within the State;
- vii. Establish a sustainable database of diverse specialized labour skills and their respective age grades;
- viii. Ensure that job creation and employment opportunities are fairly distributed in accordance with State quota/character;
- ix. Implement policies and programmes that generate both direct and indirect jobs;
- x. Have a standard benchmark for appraising and collating the benefits of job creation in the State; and
- xi. Design the framework for the measurement and documentation of job creation achievements of the administration.

***Beginning from 2015,
the job creation
programmes have
lived up to stakeholders'
expectations, countering
initial cynicism.***

Evidential basis of the Law:

The field evidence which forms the legitimate basis of stakeholder endorsements of the job creation framework leading to legislative escalation into a Law, is publicly visible and self-commending. The evident achievements, outcomes, social and economic impacts of the job creation programmes are elaborated as follows.

Programme outputs and success rates: From 2015 to date, the job creation programmes have recorded a total of five thousand and seventy-four (5,074) beneficiaries. The total beneficiaries are distributed as follows: STEP 77%, YAGEP 23%; male 53%, female 47%; WASCE 64%, BSc/HND 25% OND/NCE 11%. Across the programmes, quota is allotted to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). This distribution shows the social

inclusiveness of the programme, just as the geographical spread is exhaustive of all local government areas of the State.

The performance and impact of STEP and YAGEP have been assessed through tracer studies to determine the success rates among beneficiaries. Tracer study is an Outcome Assessment Methodology which tracks programme beneficiaries to ascertain if they bear the results and outcomes anticipated by the programme. Since inception in 2015, two consecutive tracer surveys have been carried out. The first was conducted by Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer with professional facilitation by experts at Lagos Business School/Pan Atlantic University, from August 9th to 31st 2018. The field verification covered a total of 2,242 beneficiaries from 2015/16-2016/17 plus Brown STEP 2017/18. The second tracer survey was conducted by Directorate of Youth Monitoring and Mentoring (DYMM) in conjunction with

Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer, February 11th to 21st 2020. It covered a total of 4,255 beneficiaries from 2015/16 to 2018/19. Results of the two consecutive tracer surveys show that the success rates have generally improved over time. Pooled success rates for the two consecutive survey periods increased from STEP 56% and YAGEP 66% in 2016/2017 to STEP 60% and YAGEP 77% in 2018/2019.

Impact of YAGEP on the agricultural economy:

The Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) and other agricultural sector interventions of the State Government have had significant impact on the state economy. Data generated by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and published in August 2018 show that the state's agricultural sector grew at an accelerated rate from 2015-2017, compared to the period before 2015. It grew by annual average of 8.6% from 2013-2015 but accelerated to annual average of 13.3% from 2015-2017. This is clear evidence of incremental growth impacts of YAGEP, PPSP and other agricultural sector interventions of Governor Okowa since 2015.

Specifically, the development of farm enterprise clusters, owned and managed by the youth, is transforming the state's

agricultural landscape, and having a demonstration effect on agricultural modernization. Currently, there are a total of twenty-five (25) YAGEP farm enterprise clusters with varying combinations of enterprises including poultry, piggery, fishery, rice, and tomato production. The cluster model of youth agricultural employment has restored previously idle agricultural resources to economic use and boosted agricultural productivity and wealth generation in the state.

One distinctive landmark of YAGEP is the development of the rice value chain through youth agricultural entrepreneurship. The rice value chain initiative involves instructional and field-based training, farm enterprise incubation and establishment of youths through the entire process of rice production, processing, packaging, branding, and marketing.

Impact of STEP on the services subsector: STEP and other informal sector interventions of the state government have had tremendous positive impact on the state's economy. Statistics derived from data generated by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and published in August 2018 indicate that the services sector has grown at an accelerated rate from 2015-2017, compared to the period before 2015. The average annual growth rate from 2013-2015 was 8.9% but growth accelerated at annual average of 13.2% from 2015-2017.

Livelihoods transformed.

The job creation programmes have had verifiable positive impacts on the lives of previously unemployed Delta youths and on the economy and development of the state. Across the state, there are testimonies of successful small businesses and life-changing stories by those who were trained, started up and mentored under STEP and YAGEP. Some have grown to become employers of labour and are training other youths to become self-employed. Others have innovatively diversified into different businesses/trades or developed business partnerships and relationships to enhance their incomes. Still, many have achieved greater employability through the programme and are now gainfully employed in the industrial and other sectors.

Big spillover effects on MSMEs. Through its partnership and collaboration with private sector training centers, the job creation programme is also impacting positively on the growth and development of the micro, small and medium enterprise (SMEs) sector in the state. By providing services as training centers, facilitators and mentors to the job creation programme, hundreds of small and medium enterprises have been stimulated and supported to upgrade their technical, entrepreneurial and managerial capacities, increase visibility/patronage and improve the quality of their services as well as achieve enterprise development.

Enhanced financial inclusion. The job creation programme has enhanced financial inclusion and access to financial services. Through its payments system, the programme has caused the creation of more than three thousand five hundred (3,500) new bank accounts belonging to its beneficiaries. These bank

accounts have grown in numbers and volume, resulting from the growth of the businesses of job creation beneficiaries. Moreover, beneficiaries of the job creation programmes have been assisted in obtaining formal microcredit under the lending programmes of Central Bank of Nigeria, Bank of Industry and Bank of Agriculture.

Conclusion and Lessons

The key developmental policy lessons from the systematic metamorphosis of Office of the Chief Job Creation Officer (OCJCO) into legally established Job and Wealth Creation Bureau (JWCB) are three-fold. One, policies and programmes that are well thought-out, accurately responsive to the needs of target population, transparently and faithfully implemented with satisfactory rates of success, will easily earn stakeholder acceptance and legitimacy. Two, policy and programme trials prior to upscaling and institutionalization are necessary to minimize, if not eliminate policy and programme failures. Three, the surest route to policy or programme sustainability is stakeholder acceptability and legitimacy translated into continuous demand for the policy or programme.

The performance and impact of STEP and YAGEP have been assessed through tracer studies of beneficiaries to determine the success rate among Beneficiaries.

Ratings by Resource Persons

BY JONATHAN ONWUKA

Emmanuella Clinton - Nuella Clinton Farms, Ogwashi-Uku

Having had a working relationship that spans five years now with the Job Creation Office as a resource person, I think I can authoritatively say that the job and wealth creation initiative of the Okowa-led government has made tremendous positive impact on the lives of youths in the state. The programme, I must emphasize, is life changing and transformative. It has succeeded in raising a crop of young entrepreneurs that are adding value to the society. The beneficiaries' enthusiasm to succeed in their vocations is palpable. And when they eventually emerge as farm owners, they are usually zealous in putting in their best to ensure they succeed.

The Job Creation Office has done excellently well. There is



EMMANUELLA CLINTON, MD,
NUELLA CLINTON FARMS, OGWASHI-UKU

this impact-driven desire on their part to see the beneficiaries succeed.

I have enjoyed excellent mutual relationship with both the Job Creation Office and beneficiaries to the extent that one of the beneficiaries recommended me for an award that I received sometime ago.

I want to commend Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for the success of the programme. A lot of poultry farmers have been empowered by the government through the Job Creation Office. When you establish an entrepreneur, you are giving him/her a means to financial freedom and sustainability. In that regard, Gov Okowa has transformed many lives, and at the same time increased the GDP of the state.

Pastor Afolabi Adun, Principal Resource Person for The STEP Programme

My assignment revolves primarily on taking life skills at the beginning of the programme during orientation, a n d entrepreneurship and business management, at the end of the programme, before starter packs are given out to beneficiaries. I have been involved since the inception of the programme in 2015.

There has been s t e a d y



PASTOR AFOLABI ADUN, PRINCIPAL RESOURCE
PERSON FOR THE STEP PROGRAMME

improvement of the programme in terms of content, organization, and delivery. There is marked advancement, and a bright future for the programme. We have continued to receive testimonies from the beneficiaries who speak glowingly about how Gov Okowa has transformed their lives through the STEP and YAGEP programmes and made them employers of labour within a short time. It is on record that over 5,000 youths have been taken off the street and empowered, by virtue of this laudable programme.

I have had positive memories and experience as a resource person. At the beginning, we had issues with getting trainees to understand what government really wanted to achieve. Many of them saw it then as their share of Delta cake, so they didn't take it seriously initially until the Chief Job Creation Officer, Prof. Eric Eboh, had to educate them to ensure they caught the real idea. Since then it has been unbroken story of success.

Talking about experience, I would say it has been worthwhile, positive and rewarding. And I look forward to future success stories with the Delta State job and wealth creation programme. I applaud the governor for his initiative on starting the programme, and his commitment to funding it.

Ari-Smart Awhinawhi, Managing Director, Smart-On Scientifica, Ughelli

Governor Ifeanyi Okowa saw into the future and came up with this laudable job and wealth creation initiative. Given Nigeria's large pool of unemployed youths, and thinking up this idea by the governor, one can say that Gov Okowa is a visionary leader with a mind for the future. The initiation of the programme is a wonderful and insightful move that came at the right time and should be applauded by Deltans.

For those of us who have had the rare privilege of interacting with these youths, we see enthusiasm, zeal, and the strong desire to succeed in life. Honestly, I would say the programme has made great impact on so many youths since its inception five years ago. Being part of the mentorship and monitoring team I say,



ARI-SMART AWHINAWHI, MD,
SMART-ON SCIENTIFICA, UGHELLI

without reservation, that the YAGEP and STEP Programmes have helped in shaping the mindset of many of our youths, that today, those who saw a bleak future, are now employers of labour. Any youth taken off the street and empowered is a big advantage to the state.



CHIEF FIDELIS UGBAH, MD, VILLA FARMS
OWNERS OF FIDORA FISH FARMS, ASABA

Chief Fidelis Ugbah, MD, Villa Farms, owners of Fidora Fish Farm, Asaba

My experience as a resource person for the YAGEP programme is something I cherish everyday. For three years now, I have been part of the noble effort of the state government to give meaning to the lives of our youths. And this is something that gives me great joy. I see youths who are embracing the future with so much excitement and, doing their training with great passion to succeed. Gov. Okowa has helped in building the youths of the state to become entrepreneurs; some of them are already diversifying into other areas, thereby broadening their business interests.

I really appreciate the Governor for the impact his administration has made in the lives of our youths. He has in no small measure reduced unemployment and crime in the society and has, also brought prosperity to Deltans. Today, beneficiaries of the programme, are no doubt, contributing to the state economy.

Thumbs Up to Job and Wealth Creation Scheme

BY MERCY ENOCH

Most people easily forget their past but there are those who are not quick in doing so, for they always remember the adage, “He who did not know when the rain started to beat him will not also know when and where the sun begins to shine on him”

President-General of Igbodo Development Union in Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta State, Deacon Matthew Okwaje, belongs to the category of those who would not forget in a hurry the worrisome situation that plagued the people in terms of high level unemployment prior to Governor Ifeanyi

Okowa's coming into office in 2015.

“We've heard about unemployment. We felt it everywhere even in our homes. I don't think there was any home that didn't have minimum of one unemployed youth before Governor Okowa came to power”, he told OkowaPlus Team who visited him at his residence in Asaba recently.

Speaking on the level of unemployment in the state, Okwaje said “It was a serious matter for parents, guardians and families - a situation where children, after their secondary and tertiary education remained unemployed. In the old, such a child ought to have been given employment to help the economy, their home and themselves. Those things vanished but with our governor coming on board, the first cycle of the job and wealth creation was introduced to empower the youths with skills that lifted the beneficiaries from joblessness to employers of labour.”

Doubting Thomases had gone to work once the programme was introduced. “During the pilot stage of the programme, many people were skeptical whether such programme will work because we have had such intervention programmes on youth employment. As the first cycle of the programme turned out to be successful, many Doubting Thomases saw reasons to believe in Governor Okowa's vision of Prosperity for all Deltans. The success was made possible with the dexterity of the professor in charge of the programme, Eric Eboh”, observed Okwaje.

He noted that the success of the first cycle triggered interest in Deltans. “People became very interested. From that first cycle to the present cycle which is the fifth, there has been this enthusiasm; everybody is trying to get there. Why? It helps for self-employment. The graduands of this programme, not only have they empowered themselves or have a source of income, but they have also helped to empower their colleagues and their juniors in one support activity or the other”

Impact of the Programme on Beneficiaries, Family and Society

In assessing the impact of the Job Creation Programme, Okwaje who has been into human and community development right from his younger days, pointed out that the Skills Training Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) and the Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) are making a lot of impact.

“Consider the impact on the youth as an individual. The youth was lying down at home before, getting bored and very unhappy. They say that an idle mind is



DEACON MATTHEW OKWAJE, THE PRESIDENT-GENERAL OF IGBODO DEVELOPMENT UNION, DELTA STATE

the devil's workshop. Today, most of the idle youths are engaged in these programmes and are self-employed. They leave the home, go to their point of activity or work depending on the nature of skills they acquired. There, they provide services for the public, earn money, earn joy, earn happiness, and are excited. From there, they begin to explore into the future; they begin to think because when you are not doing anything, you don't even think. You get to a point that you get frustrated. Like they say, experience is the best teacher. Why do they say that? It's because in doing an activity, you think, you try to evaluate what you did - yesterday in relation to what you do today. You think of how you could help that for your future. It helps you to broaden your horizon. So, that's one major thing", Okwaje stated.

He believes that the families of the beneficiaries have also been impacted as their parents are relieved because the money they used to spend on the youths are now diverted for other activities or other needs in their homes. "The parents too, are happy. I speak from the point of a guardian. I have children that were lucky to benefit."

Pointing at the photographer, Emmanuel Okwaje, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Emma Blue Media Services, who gave the video coverage and photography of this interview, Matthew said, "The young man that is doing this photo for you is one of the beneficiaries. I knew what it was for me as a guardian. But today, he is no longer bordering anybody. It got to a point that we wondered what we were going to do. And when this programme came in, he keyed into it and we know that he's talented for it. Today, we are all happy and whatever thing we were trying to do before, we've diverted our attention to other people. So, as a family, it is very important to us. That is the truth."

Using Emma Blue as example of the impact of the programme, Okwaje said, "Now, Emma has engaged another person that he

is paying. And I know other beneficiaries too, are doing same. You can imagine, if we have 5,000 graduands from this programme, from the cycles that have been conducted, and each of them take a minimum of two other persons to employ, that is about 15,000. If we have about 10,000 that are trained, we are talking of 30,000. You can see the effect. So, it's helping us out a lot just as it is helping to reduce crime which was of much concern for parents and the society. Everybody knows the tendency of an idle youth to move away from the normal life, if not guided. This programme has helped to guide our children; it has helped to guide our youths and has also empowered them," he added.

The community leader said that the programme has also impacted positively on Igbodo Kingdom. "On the average, if you go to the aspect when the governor asked the communities and their kings to sponsor this programme in terms of nomination (not paying anything, because nobody is paying anything), you can see that some of those youths who were into the programme have come back to their communities. They have their small shops for Fashion Designing, Hair Dressing Salon. Some are into Clothes-making. Some are into Catering and Confectionery etc. You see various small shops being opened in the communities. Also, the livelihood of the communities have improved. So, economically, the programme is a blessing and socially, it is good. It has reduced a lot of social problems in the system. And we pray that God will bless the governor."

GEEP Linking Unemployed Delta Professionals to Employment

Not forgetting the Graduate Employment Enhancement Programme (GEEP) still under the Job and Wealth Creation Programme, Okwaje noted that people have also been linked to companies for employment. For instance, the Oil Palm Company in Nsukwa where some Deltans have benefitted from employment, as well as other firms.

What is important is that a chunk and higher number of people are out of unemployment and that the governor's dream of raising a generation of great entrepreneurs is still being achieved, he said.

Delta Job Creation showcases Okowa as father and humane builder

Okwaje, a husband and father himself, is not surprised at the work the governor is doing as he explained, "My reason for saying that is that Senator Dr. Ifeanyi Arthur Okowa is not just a governor. He is a father, a leader, and a people builder.

"I said that our governor is a father and human builder because I've been able to attend some of the graduation ceremonies. There, if you look at our youths, you see the joy, the atmosphere of the environment and these were children that were looking pale and angry. For me, I join the children to say that God will bless him. He is a visionary leader. And that's what we want in our society. Let leaders that are visionary be in position of authority. If we have that, this society is going to change.

"The way things are, people who aspire to be leaders should have vision before they step into position. Immediately they get in there, first of all, they look dazed and confused but Okowa is



STEPPRENEUR EMMANUEL OKWAJE

a man who has been preparing himself. He didn't just jump into politics. All things being the same, if he had wanted to jump into politics 20 years ago, he would have done it, probably. But God has His time and I also think that he's a man that God loves so much, taking time to build him, to learn, fall and stand up, and learn the points. God has been directing his steps and today, he is doing fantastically well. I commend him."

Eric Eboh, a Square Peg in a Square Hole

"I also want to quickly add that the governor put a square peg in a square hole by making Prof Eric Eboh the head of this Job Creation Office. If you go down to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), you will see Eboh's track record. Right from his Secondary School days, I got to know him; he has a very sound academic and moral record. You can see a lot of creativity in what he's doing. It's not easy".

Prayer for Programme to Outlive Okowa's Tenure

He sees the Job Creation Office doing well. "So far, so good, the place is doing well. My prayer is that before the governor leaves office, let him continue what he is doing and we do hope that it is going to be a programme for Deltans not Okowa's programme. It will outlive the governor's tenure".

He wants successive administrations to buy into the programme and improve upon what the current administration has done, for greater social and economic growth of the state.

'Seeing Is Believing'

Says **Tunde Ekpekurede**, Human Development Expert

BY MERCY ENOCH

Although the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Programme has attracted some criticisms, most of it come from people who did not bother to study and understand the scheme. To those people, Mr. Tunde Ekpekurede, founder of Tunde Ekpekurede Foundation, has a word for them: "I've seen the beneficiaries of this programme. Seeing is believing! This programme is not a '419 thing' as has been the case with previous skill acquisition programmes in the state."

In an emotional tone, Ekpekurede who spoke to *OkowaPlus* Team via online, said he has never seen a government train people, empower them with starter kits to start up their chosen enterprises. He lauded the Okowa Administration for embarking on a journey many dared to take and waxing stronger for five years running.



**MR. TUNDE EKPEKUREDE, FOUNDER AND CEO,
TUNDE EKPEKUREDE FOUNDATION, ADEJE, OKPE
LGA, DELTA STATE**

FEATURE

To him, the fact that the state government has sustained the programme amidst economic down-turn occasioned by crash in crude oil prices and the novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic, is proof that the governor is committed to his vision of building a generation of great entrepreneurs who would help drive the economic diversification of the state.

Tunde and his wife, Beatrice, are natives of Adeje Community in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State and they had committed themselves to the task of empowering unemployed youths with skills to encourage them to be independent and stop begging money as has been the norm with most youths even after graduating from higher institutions.

He reasoned that joblessness could be the underlying factor behind their begging and thought of ways to help them out of it. He did that by teaching them how to fish and not how to eat the fish. That he did and is still doing through the Tunde Ekpekurede Foundation.

Vision of the Ekpekuredes, Setbacks, and Okowa's Intervention

"The foundation is about helping unemployed people. We run skills acquisition programme like tailoring, GSM phone repair, entrepreneurship, and all that. We help out-of-school children also to get into school. We also help Dr. Okowa to provide some free teachers in primary schools in areas there are no perfect teachers to cover them," he said.

Revealing the motive behind the establishment of the foundation, Ekpekurede said "We started in Sapele and Warri some years ago. We did Job Empowerment Programme for over 1,000 unemployed graduates in Warri between 2010 and 2013, including Youth Corpers and all that. In Warri, we did that of 2013 and the Government of Delta State sent a delegation to visit us twice. When we closed our Warri Office in 2014, we were to tell the Delta State Government that we were having financial challenges in running the programme. We were sustaining ourselves from our savings - myself and my wife. So, we tried to get the government delegation, but it wasn't coming quick as we wanted.

"We have good testimonies to the lives that are changed by what we were doing. I came from Adeje. So, when Warri gave more expenses and when I looked at what was going on at Adeje - the fact that every time I drove to my property at Adeje, I saw a lot of unemployed men coming to beg for money. So, I built a training centre there. A couple of friends helped me buy sewing machines, computers etc. That's how we started. Later on, as we kept on doing, not allowing ourselves to have the problems we had in Warri, we discovered that multiple were interested in the service but the resources were not able to cover it.

"As the work we were doing was expanding, we tried to seek government's attention. The then Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Hon Igbuya, came to visit us and was pleased with what we were doing as he was told. In one of our meetings, Prof Eric Eboh of Job Creation Office said he's highly interested, that I should come to Asaba. Straight away that very day, I took a taxi to Asaba and met him, and he showed interest. He gave me offer to be one of the Speakers in one of the cycles' retreat in Songhai located at Sapele in Sapele Local Government Area of the state. I spoke and thereafter, periodically, Job Creation Officials visited us at Adeje, Okpe Local Government Area.

So, from time to time, we received visitors from Okpe Local Government Council, indicating government's involvement in helping us but we don't know how the help will come.

"Later on, we were glad when the government decided they were interested in sponsoring them (our trainees) to do same programme. So, we provided them with names but honestly, I did not follow up with the outcome of those names we submitted to the State Government. However, in year 2018 and 2019, we got definite confirmation of people who received the palliatives and who were trained by the Delta State

Government. We were actually very excited.

"But for the intervention of the state government, my wife and I would have borne the entire cost of training those young folks. And we weren't doing as much as what the government is doing. We will train you, but we weren't giving you starter kits. We didn't have money to do that.

"In 2020, I was personally very excited because I was living in Lagos and really followed up. What the government did, the cheques they were given was overwhelming and I did a letter to the Delta State Government, because I used to be very skeptical when government says they want to do something. This time, I was shocked that this thing was real. I remembered

the first time I heard it, I just said 'that's another avenue to siphon money. Nobody is giving anybody anything'. But after seeing this, I was shocked because I had not seen a situation where Government would train people, and give them money and materials to start their business."

Doubts over as Foundation Benefitted from Delta Job Creation even till Date

Indeed, seeing is believing, said Ekpekurede as he recalled his experience. "When one happened, it was like luck. When it happened earlier this year again for which I also wrote a letter to the Job Creation Office and copied the Governor, I was doing it not only because it has happened twice, but also because this year's Starter Kits were given in July when states like Lagos were slashing their budgets after COVID-19 lockdown. The Delta Job Creation Programme is not a 419 thing. So, I did a Letter of Appreciation to Prof Eric Eboh. It's rare for somebody to be appointed into that kind of position and the position is not compromised and the proceeds not diverted. I really commend Prof Eboh for the great job he is doing.

"I used to be very skeptical when government says they want to do something....But after seeing this, I was shocked because I had not seen a situation where Government would train people, and give them money and materials to start their business."

Seeing is believing!

Before I experienced this personally, I remembered while in London, I saw a documentary about what Okowa's Job Creation was doing. I said it was a lie but recently, I watched and saw that it wasn't a lie. Some three weeks ago, on Channels TV one Saturday morning, I was watching this - people uprooting cassava in farms and all of that. I was excited because for the first time my own people in Adeje in Okpe Local Government Area benefitted. I did not go and lobby. I have not been to Asaba in the last two years. To me this is a wonderful experience. This is the kind of thing I would expect in the United States of America or the United Kingdom but I am getting it here..

'I Never Knew Much About Delta Job Creation Until My Son Became A Beneficiary'

– Chief Louis Okogba

- Says programme impacts on family and
- Calls for programme continuation beyond Gov Okowa's tenure

BY MERCY ENOCH

Louis Okogba is a titled chief in Irri Kingdom in Isoko South Local Government Area in Delta State but he said he did not know much about the Delta State Job Creation Programme until his son, Louis-Kogba Elvis became one of the Brown-YAGEP beneficiaries.

Elvis whose business name is Tozor-P Farms Venture, said he started his business after serving his fatherland under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), having studied Agricultural Science in the University. In 2017, after graduation, he started Poultry Business and was fortunate to be among those who were enrolled into the 2019 cycle of the programme.

"In March this year, they gave us an empowerment package after one-month training. We were already into the enterprise and they gave us refresher course and empowered us. And being empowered by government is a good thing. I have passion for the Poultry Enterprise. I made use of the empowerment and opportunity given to me. And today, I am happy, smiling. I'm very okay. I can now stand on my feet to do whatever thing I want to do even employ some persons in the community", he said.

He revealed, "The government asked me to get 300 birds, but I went for 500 birds because I was also having little money with



CHIEF LOUIS OKOGBA, A COMMUNITY LEADER IN
IRRI, ISOKO SOUTH LGA

me. I'm doing very well and some of them are now at the point of lay", he added as he prayed God to bless the governor.

His father, Chief Okogbo in an interview with OkowaPlus Team, said he did not know much about the Job Creation until when Elvis was empowered.

"With my son going into the system, I came to realize that it is something worth doing. He did Poultry Rearing in his project at final year. After his NYSC, he started his poultry farm before the state government's intervention came. That programme lifted him, and I can boast of him standing on his feet, caring for himself. The programme is a good one. I love it."

On his own, Elvis wouldn't have known that there was a life changing programme ongoing, but he had good friends that informed him of the programme and urged him to come along for the online registration. Like the adage, "Heaven helps those who help themselves", he would have missed the opportunity if he hadn't taken a step of faith. He went with his friend and he was favoured.

Chief Okogba said that he was overwhelmed especially when he saw the packages given to his son - the number of birds and the financial involvement; especially when the Job Creation Officials brought bags of feed to enable him take proper care of the birds.

"With what Okowa is doing, I see him as a governor who has good plans for the youth of the state because the programme has impacted positively on the people. I and my family have been impacted too", he said.

Most people believe that only those who are 'connected to the state authority' benefit from the programme but Okogba's confession would prove them wrong. "I couldn't have influenced anybody to select my son. Though I know one or two people in government, honestly, I didn't know much about the programme and so, the issue of 'pressing button' to ensure his selection was not there. They did everything online without my approaching anybody. They picked him and that was how he became one of the beneficiaries.

Elvis is not just the only beneficiary of the programme in his area or the neighbouring communities as revealed by his father, "I must be frank, I have children in the kingdom benefitting from the programme. Through my son, I was able to see some of the beneficiaries in this area. They exist at Oleh, Uzere, Emede etc. In Irri Community here, we have up to four beneficiaries among others", he disclosed.

Chief Okogba wants the programme continued beyond Governor Okowa's tenure. Next administration should continue with this because it's helpful to the youth. It helps in checking the youths from going into nefarious activities.

While commending Job Creation Officials for monitoring the beneficiaries, he advised for closer supervision of the programme to ensure that the beneficiaries would not deviate from the standards and that government's investment on them would not be a waste.



MR ELVIS LOUIS-OKOGBA, A BROWN YAGEPRENEUR, FIRST SON OF CHIEF LOUIS OKOGBA

More Leaders See Delta Job Creation As Boost To The Economy

- It has given push to the beneficiaries and our communities
- Crimes reduced as more enterprises birth
- Programme more realistic than those of past administrations

BY MERCY ENOCH

More community leaders have continued to hail the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Programme for its contributions to the growth of the state even as they see it as giving a push to both the beneficiaries and their communities.

They said it has led to the birth of many small-scale enterprises, rapid wealth exchange and crime reduction in the communities.

Larry Onyechie

The President-General of Agbor Progressive Union, Mr Larry Onyechie, in an interview with OkowaPlus Team in his office, said "Now, if you go to my area (Agbor), people don't think much of white collar jobs since there is none. You see some graduates as tilers, some are painters, some are into farming. Once you start building a shop, before the completion, they have rented it.

According to him, people in his area are thinking more on how to be self-employed than how to begin to look for 'manna from heaven'. He added that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has also made those who have penchant for travelling outside the country in search of green pastures, to now look inwards to contribute to the economic development of their communities and state.

Continuing, he said, "I know many people who are beneficiaries of the current empowerment programme who are now running their own enterprises. They have passion for the skills they have learnt under Okowa and they no longer depend on government.

Continued on page 48

Former Deputy Governor Elue Commends Okowa For Encouraging Farming

BY FIDELIS EGUGBO

FORMER Deputy Governor of Delta State, Chief (Sir) Benjamin Elue has commended Governor Ifeanyi Okowa's efforts at encouraging farming through the Job Creation Office.

Chief Elue who spoke with OkowaPlus in his country home, Obior, Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta State, disclosed that encouraging the youths to go into farming is very important because of the sustainability of the business. He also, advised the State Government to

ensure proper tracking of the empowerment programmes for the desired results to be achieved.

"Our Governor, Senator, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa has done very fine with the agricultural programmes. Even in my community, he has helped us and his programme of empowering farmers is exemplary. He gave us a rice mill and we now have a place to mill our paddy rice. People come from outside the community to also mill their rice.

"The late Tony Obuh was coming here to mill his rice, even the former Commissioner, my friend, Raymos Guanah was also coming here to make use of the rice mill. The issue now is that we must get good support to get the right variety that is viable here; the viability I am saying is because, this is an upland rice cultivating area, so we need that the variety that can grow well here.

"We used to go to Agbede, Kogi and other places to get that particular variety that is sustainable here. Our Governor has greatly supported farmers, some young boys who were doing nothing now engage in rice farming, though, labour is very costly. It has made a lot of people to leave riding of Okada to farming which is more sustainable.

"We are having a lot of support from the State Government but, it can never be enough, especially in terms of mechanized farming. We are trying to encourage our youths not to abandon our age-long tradition of farming and the Job Creation Office is very useful in that area but, they should track the empowerment more effectively like in those days when we used to have field officers who would come to the farm and assist. Naturally, if you give out something, you track it, the money is not coming easy.

"I am farming even if it is not for commercial purpose for now, I am a farmer and I encourage everybody to go into farming. Whoever that is in government should continue to encourage farming, our Governor has done very well in that regards."



CHIEF BENJAMION ELUE



MR LARRY ONYECHE,
PRESIDENT
-GENERAL OF
AGBOR
PROGRESSIVE
UNION

Continued from page 47

"Now, government has introduced what is called Brown STEP and Brown-YAGEP. If you have learnt a skill before and now show interest, they would retrain you and empower you. That's a new addition to that programme. They now pay attention to the skilled and semi-skilled persons. Even the GEEP, our people have been linked up to companies through it"

While commending the planning, execution of the programme and its contribution to economic development of the state, he urged the beneficiaries to avoid pitfalls that could lead to their failure in business even as he advised Deltans to embrace the programme.

Okeh Akpogheneta

In his contribution, Okeh Akpogheneta, a community leader in Adabrasi-Aghalokpe in Okpe Local Government Area of the state, said the beneficiaries were doing well.

"To an extent, I give the programme 75%. I cannot specifically mention the number of all the beneficiaries but in my area, I can point out up to six persons who I have actually visited the location of their enterprises and seen them working."

Akpogheneta, who is a councillor representing Aghalokpe Ward 12 and 6 and Deputy Leader of the Legislative House, said his part is to patronize them by buying their products.

Oji Irikefe Odiri

A youth leader in Sapele, Oji Irikefe Odiri said the chicken barbecues people eat in Sapele City are products from the Poultry farms of YAGEP beneficiaries. Because of their poultry



HON OKEH AKPOGHENETA,
YOUTH LEADER IN
AGHALOKPE AND
COUNCILLOR
-REPRESENTING ADABRASI
-AGHALOKPE WARD 12

enterprises, chicken is now very much available and affordable in the market and those who use them for barbecues need not worry to go far away to purchase them.

Odiri, who is also an Agricultural Extension Officer in Patani Local Government Area, said that the youths in the area have also benefitted from the programme and that it has given them a sense of belonging.

Perhaps, if Delta State Government had not done the selection of the beneficiaries through random process, places like Patani would have been ignored because it is a remote area and has no access road except through water.

Random selection of the beneficiaries, he said has contributed to the reduction of crime in the communities.



MR OJI IRIKEFE ODIRI,
YOUTH LEADER IN SAPELE
AND DELTA AGRIC
EXTENSION SUPERVISOR IN
PATANI LGA

PHOTO *Splash*



A BENEFICIARY IN CATERING CARRYING HER STARTER PACK TO THE VEHICLE



A BENEFICIARY IN POULTRY SIGNING FOR HIS DAY OLD BROILERS



A CROSS SECTION OF WIDOWS WITH THEIR MELON SHELLING MACHINES AND GENERATORS



A CROSS SECTION OF WIDOWS IN WARRI TO RECEIVE JOB CREATION MELON SHELLING MACHINES AND GENERATORS



A BENEFICIARY LOADING HER BIRDS INTO A VEHICLE



A BENEFICIARY TRAINED IN HAIRDRESSING, MAKEOVER AND BRAIDING



A FEMALE BENEFICIARY AND HER STARTER PACK



A CROSS SECTION OF STARTER PACKS FOR CATERING STEPRENEURS



AUDIO-VISUAL STARTER PACK



A STEPRENEUR IN CATERING AND CONFECTIONERY DISPLAYS HER CERTIFICATE AND CHEQUE



BROWN YAGEPRENEURS IN POULTRY WITH THE FIRST TRANCHE OF BIRD FEEDS



BLESSING AJUEYITISI COLLECTING HER JOB CREATION CERTIFICATE



STPRENEURS IN HAIRDRESSING, MAKEOVER & BRAIDING



A BENEFICIARY TRAINED IN HAIRDRESSING, MAKEOVER AND BRAIDING



CATERING STARTER PACK



STEPRENEURS IN AUDIO-VISUAL SERVICES AND PHOTOGRAPHY



TWO YAGEPRENEURS ABOUT TO LEAVE DEPART FROM UGHELLI TOWNSHIP STADIUM WITH THEIR FISH FEEDS



THE STATE COORDINATOR OF WIDOWS WELFARE SCHEME HANDING OUT ONE OF THE MACHINES AND GENERATORS TO A BENEFICIARY



UGBOKODO-OKPE YAGEP FISH FARM CLUSTER



BIRD FEEDS FOR YAGEPRENEURS IN POULTRY



FARM INPUT FOR YAGEPRENEURS IN CROP PRODUCTION



DISTRIBUTION OF FISH FEEDS TO YAGEPRENEURS IN UGHELLI



STPRENEURS IN HAIRDRESSING,MAKEOVER AND BRAIDING



RAISING OF DYKE IN UGBOKODO-OKPE YAGEP FISH FARM CLUSTER



JOB CREATION STAFF AND ASSESSORS AT THE MEETING



DISTRIBUTION OF BIRDS FEEDS TO YAGEPRENEURS IN WARRI



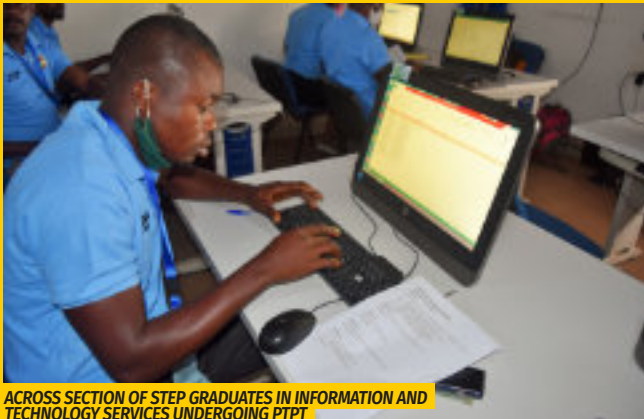
STARTER PACKS FOR BENEFICIARIES IN FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN



DAY OLD BROILERS FOR GREEN YAGEPRENEURS



STARTER PACK FOR STEPREENEURS IN DECORATION AND EVENT MANAGEMENT



ACROSS SECTION OF STEP GRADUATES IN INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES UNDERGOING PTPT



A CROSS SECTION OF STEP GRADUATES IN FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN DURING PTPT AT NEOPELE, WARRI



ACROSS SECTION OF STEP GRADUATES IN INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES UNDERGOING PTPT



A CROSS SECTION OF STEP GRADUATES IN FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN CUTTING THEIR TEST FABRIC DURING PTPT

PPSP

Testimonials

The Production and Processing Support Programme (PPSP), an initiative of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, was implemented only in the 2015/2016 Cycle, the first year of his first tenure. It was designed to support already existing farmers with the aim of diversifying the economy

and promoting the agricultural value chain among others. A total of 815 farmers across the three senatorial districts benefitted from the programme. The beneficiaries comprise 475 Cassava farmers who were given improved variety of cassava cuttings, fertilizer and cash component; 100 farmers in Fish Production who were supported with fingerlings, feeds and cash; 100 Poultry broiler farmers who received 200 day-old chicks each, feeds and cash and 50 poultry layer farmers who got 200 layers, feeds and cash. In the same vein, 50 piggery farmers were supported with 10 growers, feeds and cash while 40 Tomatoes farmers were supported with seedlings, agrochemicals and cash.

Five years after, Gertrude Onyekachukwu-Uteh, visited some of the beneficiaries for feedback on the effects of the support package on their farm enterprises.

NAME: NWAJOEI FREDRICK

LGA: ANIOCHA NORTH

ENTERPRISE: PIGGERY

Fredrick Nwaojei is the MD of Chu Resources Enterprises, Issele-Uku and a renowned pig farmer. He confirmed he received ten piglets and the sum of two hundred and ten thousand naira for feeds from the State Government under its Production and Processing Support Programme (PPSP.) He applauded the State for taking the initiative for the first time to introduce PPSP in appreciation and recognition of farmers' efforts at promoting self-reliance and food security. He tells us his story so far.

Government's intervention in my farm through PPSP five years ago had a multiplier effect because those piglets were served by my boars when they became of age and I used the two little male piglets when they came of age to serve my own female pigs. This cross-fertilization continued over time to avoid in-breeding and, as a result, they multiplied exceedingly over the years. The gestation period was eight months. They fallowed at sixty kilo weight. I am not looking at the support package, but at the multiplier effect and that the government gave us good breed was a big plus. Therefore, Governor Okowa did so well. Piggery is a money spinning venture, but capital intensive. PPSP was a great encouragement to me and I used the input as a project in my farm. After four years, I culled the animals and sold each for sixty thousand naira. Till date, their breed and off spring are still in my farm and I am still reaping the benefits."

Rating the PPSP 90%, he advised the State Government to



FREDRICK NWAJOEI

institutionalize the job creation programmes, STEP and YAGEP, to enable administrations after Governor Okowa to continue with the programmes.



QUEENETH IGHONMIEYETAN

NAME: IGHONMIEYETAN QUEENETH

LGA: WARRI SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: FISH PRODUCTION

Queeneth Ighonmioletan is a beneficiary of PPSP and YAGEP. She is located at YAGEP Fish Farm Cluster at Egbokodo-Itsekiri in Warri South Local Government.

Speaking on the support package she received under PPSP through Alero Egbokodo Cluster Farm Cooperative, she said a stock of 1,000 juveniles and 40 bags of fish feeds were given to her to boost her business as an already existing fish farmer. She affirmed that these support packages boosted her morale and improved her business.

"I had two fishponds before I benefitted from PPSP and was established with two fishponds as a YAGEPpreneur and over the years, I have acquired an additional pond, making the number of fishponds I own five.

"The State Government's job creation programme is good. Establishment is the good aspect because so many of us were taken out of unemployment market, but the problem is that those of us here are not being cared for. We in Egbokodo-Itsekiri need the same treatment given to our counterparts in Ugbokodo-Okpe YAGEP Fish Cluster. We want our dyke raised too. Our expectations were high but we were not properly followed-up. Most big-time farmers succeed through loan; we need easy access to loan to grow our businesses."

NAME: OMARETSESIONE SHOLA

LGA: WARRI SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: FISH PRODUCTION

Shola Omaretsesione is one of the fish farmers located at Egbokodo-Itsekiri Fish Farm Cluster and was a beneficiary of the State Government's PPSP in 2015.

"PPSP enhanced my business a little. I received 1,000 juveniles and forty bags of feeds support through Iwere Cooperative Society in Egbokodo-Itsekiri. Though the feeds were not enough to feed the fish coupled with lots of mortality, I used the proceeds to expand my business. I had two ponds then, but I now have four ponds."

He decried the high cost of fish feeds in the country, calling on the State Government to subsidize fish feeds for fish farmers in order to boost fish production in the State. He appealed to the State Government to revive the PPSP and advised that there should be increased monitoring of farmers in the State.



SHOLA OMARETSESIONE

NAME: TUOYO SHOLA

LGA: WARRI SOUTH

ENTERPRISE: FISH PRODUCTION

Shola Tuoyo is the MD of Shola Farms at Egbokodo-Itsekiri and is a big time farmer with over twenty thousand stocks at present. Tuoyo was given 1,000 juveniles and 40 bags of fish feed which came as relief support package after the 2015 flooding.

"After the 2015 flooding, relief materials were sent to us under



SHOLA TUOYO

PPSP. Fish feeds and juveniles were delivered to Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 at Ubeji Egbokodo-Itsekiri Fish Farmers. The support was not sufficient. The support package came timely enough but it was nothing quantified with our loss."

While scoring the programme 50%, he advised the State Government to improve on its monitoring system and to review its programmes from time to time for greater productivity in the agricultural sector.

NAME: KEMEFA ROLAND

LGA: OKPE

ENTERPRISE: POULTRY

Chief Roland Kemefa is the MD of Rokeba Farms in Orreokpe.



ROLAND KEMEFA

Being a beneficiary of the PPSP, he remains grateful to the State Government for the assistance, which he said was a boost to his poultry enterprise. He received 200 broiler birds, 30 bags of bird feeds and money for medication. He said he was surprised when he was called by a staff of the Job

Creation Office and invited for verification.

"It was during the ember months and by Christmas; it was of great lift to my business and the products were of good quality. I had only three mortality. I commend the State Government for that. I had thought it would be a continuous programme, but it never came again. The Delta State Job Creation Scheme has helped to alleviate the sufferings of the people, especially the youth. At present, many youths are gainfully employed and busy through STEP and YAGEP."

While scoring the implementation of PPSP 60%, he advised government to monitor farm roads and to continue to support farmers by subsidizing animal feeds as it is done in other climes.

NAME: OKORO MOSES

LGA: IKA NORTH EAST

ENTERPRISE: CROP PRODUCTIONS

Moses Okoro received support in Cassava Production. He was given improved variety of cassava cuttings, fertilizer, and cash for labour.

"It was a particularly good initiative, but it got to us late during the dry season. Those of us who are professionally inclined were able to manage it. We nurtured it and it developed. After the farming season, some of the farmers complained that the tubers got rotten in the soil. This happened because they harvested it late, between one to two years. I harvested mine after nine months and it yielded very big tubers. Unfortunately, I lost some of my cuttings to fire as a result of indiscriminate bush burning. I still have some which I nurture for multiplication to supply to others."

He opined that agriculture support packages such as cassava cuttings and seedlings should be given between March and April and farmers should be sensitized early enough to prepare their land in February for greater farm yield.



MOSES OKORO

PTPT: Raising the Bar for Trainees

BY GERTRUDE ONYEKACHUKWU-UTEH AND PROMISE OGANA

As part of its deliberate efforts at sustaining the gains of the job creation programme, the Delta State Government has continued to improve the job creation implementation process. One of such ways is the introduction of the Post Training Proficiency Test (PTPT) into the Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP). The PTPT is designed for both Green and Brown STEP trainees on completion of their training programmes. Otherwise known as the Completion Proficiency Test, it was introduced in the third quarter of 2019.

It promotes discipline, quality control during training and ensures that Starter Packs are given to the right persons who have established proficiency in their chosen skills. Based on these premises, all STEP graduates are subjected to a test to qualify them for the fourth phase of the training programme, which is the Business Management and Entrepreneurship Training (EBMT). Prior to the introduction of PTPT, every STEP graduate automatically qualified for Starter Packs immediately after the hands-on training. Failing the PTPT means that the trainee would have to repeat the training at personal cost within one month, retake the test or forfeit the opportunity permanently.

We visited some of the designated assessment centres for PTPT to feel the pulse of the trainers, assessors, and STEP graduates on the effects of the PTPT on the programme.

At NeoPele Concept, Warri, the venue for STEP graduates in Fashion and Textile Design who live in Warri and environs, one of the assessors, Mr Sylvester Asilekwu of Sylvesbest Fashion, Warri, pointed out that the beneficiaries were tested practically on skills acquired, the neatness of their work and the ability of the graduates to complete their tasks within two hours. He explained that the introduction of PTPT into the programme has compelled the trainees to take the programme more seriously.

According to him, “they have become more focused and



THE CEO OF NEOPELE CONCEPT AND A JOB CREATION TRAINER, MR NDUKA OKORO PELE

interested in the training. It has helped to check absenteeism among trainees, made the training process easier for me. On my part, I put in more effort so that my trainees do not fail the test. I commend Governor Okowa for creating the opportunity for me to upgrade my business and to do business with government.”

The CEO of NeoPele Concept and a job creation trainer, Mr Nduka Okoro Pele, also attested to the positive effects of PTPT on the programme. “The new method has helped the trainees and trainers,” he stated. “Before now, anyone who passed through the programme was certified whether proficient or not. Now, only those who have proven their proficiency through PTPT receive Starter Packs. Trainees no longer excuse themselves from training. It has also made me to engage other instructors to teach them to ensure that we cover the training module. The introduction of PTPT is also a check on the trainer which in turn helps the government to get value for their investment on these youths.”

Mr Lawrence Pele, NeoPele’s father, who has been in the fashion industry since 1962, advised the youth to take the training more seriously. “If this generation can be serious with these trainings put in place by Governor Okowa,” he said, “Delta State will become an industrial destination for investors. We are not seeing the dividends of the programme now. In few years to come, Deltans will realise and appreciate more what Governor Okowa did during his administration.”

At Signature Secret, Asaba, the assessment venue for STEP graduates in Fashion and Textile Design located in Asaba and environs, an assessor and a trainer, Mrs Patricia Onwuegbuzie of Da-Kuku Limited and Garment Factory, Agbor, said PTPT is a good development. According to her, “PTPT has added impetus to the programme. There is more zeal to learn. As a trainer, I update myself regularly and bring myself down to their level to help them understand and to learn faster.”

For Mrs Bridget Ajala Asindi, an assessor, a trainer and the CEO of BrijTonet International Fashion Academy, the yardstick for

assessing the graduates are cutting, interpretation of measurement on the fabric and the finishing. She stated that PTPT has heightened the passion for the skill in the trainees, which



A JOB CREATION TRAINER AND ASSESSOR, MRS BRIDGET AJALA ASINDI

in turn is a guarantee that the Starter Pack will not be sold. "It serves as an opportunity for them to showcase what they have learnt before empowerment. They have eagerly been looking forward to it. On the part of the trainer, PTPT increased our input. For instance, if we were putting in 40% before proficiency test was introduced, we now put in 70% because we want our trainees to do well. It has made the programme better and is a guarantee that government's effort is not wasted."

Also speaking, a trainer and the CEO of Signature Secret, Asaba, Mrs Oreva Okowa, said PTPT is an enabler. "At the beginning," she narrated, "many STEP graduates received the Starter Packs and sold them off. Now, we are beginning to come to reality. It is now more profitable for the government and a guarantee that the beneficiary is proficient and would not sell the Starter Pack. For trainers who thought they could get away with truancy, that door has been shut permanently as no trainer wants his trainee to fail."

One of the beneficiaries, Rivca Nwauzo (Oshimili North), explained that PTPT motivated her to work harder, not just to learn and be established but to learn in order to pass the PTPT. He expressed confidence in his performance with the hope that the outcome would be a success.

Bukola Julian Ogwngbemi (Aniocha South LGA) admitted that the job creation programme has helped her to realise her potentials of becoming an entrepreneur and a fashion designer. She stated that the PTPT energized her to take the training seriously, adding that she completed her task of producing a 360° peplon top with a short sleeve in good time and was confident that she would pass the test.

Mr Chukwuka Fredrick Ifeanyi, a trainer in Interlocking and Tiling is proper handling of materials, accurate measurement and moulding of interlocking stones. He added that the introduction of PTPT has helped the trainers to prepare beneficiaries who are serious minded in their various skills, stressing that without PTPT, the State Government would likely produce half-baked beneficiaries thereby defeating the purpose of STEP.

The CEO of BIVI Global Venture, Mr Bonaventure Akpabor, a



A CROSS SECTION OF STEP GRADUATES IN FASHION AND TEXTILE DESIGN CUTTING THEIR TEST FABRIC DURING PTPT

trainer/assessor said the PTPT has helped to expose the flaws of many beneficiaries even after training. He explained that the introduction of PTPT has brought out the best in each of the trainees, noting that the job creation programme would be better if the State Government could improve on the method of selecting the trainees before they are posted out for training. "I have come to realise that most beneficiaries are not willing to learn and when asked, they would say 'this is not my field. I am doing this because I do not have an option'. If this is not checked, Starter Packs will continue to be given to those who do not need it," he cautioned.

Smith Michael Ogu, a trainee expressed gratitude to God and the State Government for the privilege to be trained in both Interlocking and Tiling. According to him, "The PTPT has helped me to be more serious in learning, knowing fully well that I will not be given a Starter Pack if I fail the test. So, I am fully prepared and ready for the test."

Earlier, Oboh Clinton, a trainee who hails from Ughelli North stated that before now, he had thought tiles were laid on walls and floors only, but the programme has exposed him to the full meaning of tiling. "I was excited I took part in the PTPT because I knew what I was doing and what I did in 30 minutes of the test is what I have been taught all through the period of my training. I can boldly say I have passed the test," he enthused.

At Schoolville Limited, Asaba, the assessment centre for those in Information and Technology Services (ITS), a job creation and assessor from Unique Computer Institute, Asaba, Mr Bright Kelechi, observed that PTPT increased the trainees' readiness and seriousness to learn, stressing that the State Government took the right decision by challenging them to a test.

Samuel Ikpeama Okafor (Aniocha South) was trained at Unique Computers, Asaba. Describing the PTPT as a "welcome development," adding that "at Unique Computers, there was good emphasis on practical and the engineering knowledge of computer. With the push occasioned by the PTPT, I am good to go." Chinonso Illomechine (Aniocha South) who trained at Schoolville Limited, Asaba, while emphasizing that PTPT increased her passion for her choice of enterprise, expressed gratitude to Governor Okowa for the initiative.

What Our Royal Fathers Are Saying About The Job Creation Scheme

BY VICTOR EFEIZOMOR AND KENNETH ORUSI

'The Job Creation Scheme Has Curbed Youths Migration Abroad in Delta'

- His Majesty Obi Dr. E.O Efeizomor 11, JP, OON, Obi of Owa, and Chairman Delta State Council of Traditional Rulers

Five years down the line, how will you assess this programme?

It has brought youths out of crime because they have something that is keeping them occupied. Delta youths have largely withdrawn from running out of the country to Libya, Ghana, and Italy in search of greener pastures. Funny enough, when they get there, they are not trained for the job they are looking for. But here in Nigeria, the youths are now trained in tailoring, production of cream, those who engage in these are now becoming rich. They engage people by opening of shops and by so doing, they not only feed themselves, but they also feed others.

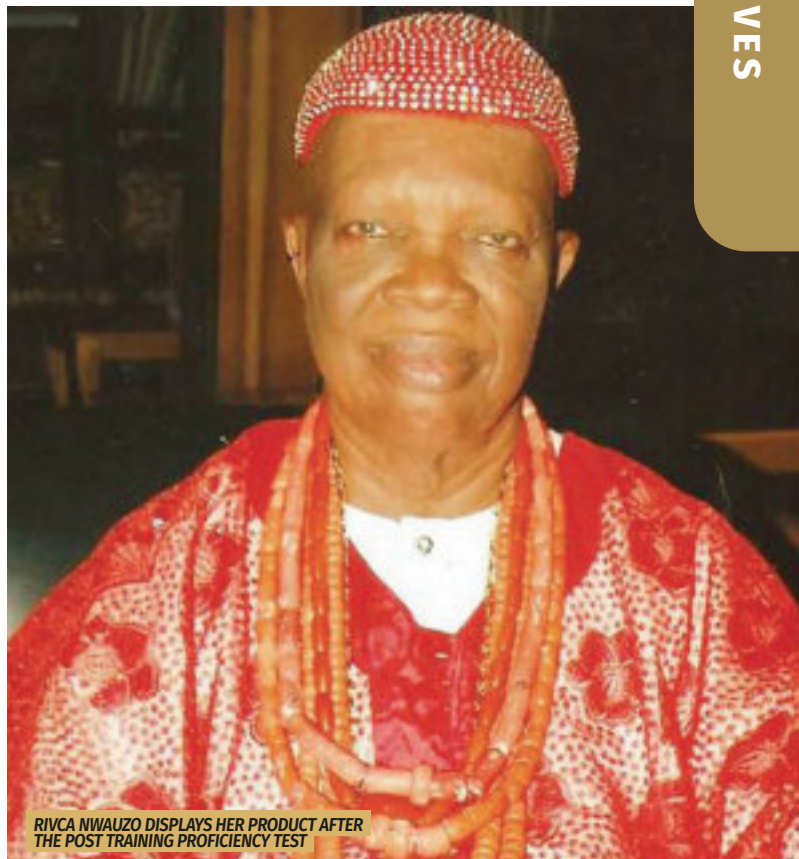
There are evidences that those trained are doing well. This should make those who have ran out of the country to come back instead of becoming a burden to other countries.

What would you say is the impact of the programme to your people?

As a matter of fact, it is fantastic. People are going into fish farming, maize farming, and many other things. People are harvesting corn twice a year.

The dignity of labour is restored. In the past, if you asked youths to go to farm, it is like an abuse but the situation is different now. The youths now own cassava farms. Even when you harvest the stem, you make money, then the main cassava root, you also make money. You get garri out of it, you create starch out of it, you make fufu out of it.

I think it has brought sanity among the youth knowing fully well that they can take care of themselves from it without really



relying on government for white collar jobs.

Your Highness Sir, sometimes we have heard of youths who undergo these programmes at the end when Starter Packs are given to them, they sell them off. What do you think government should do?

The government has done very well but it has been an attitudinal problem. It is a matter of the company you keep. It is a matter of societal problem. When somebody takes photograph in a hideout in Libya, and he posts it on Facebook, and gives a false impression of the place he is in until you hear the true story.

At the same time, parents have not done enough in getting their children to settle down and learn a job that will enable them to survive. They want to make it fast.

Your Majesty, what is your message to the State Government and Deltans in general?

First, I must congratulate the Governor because he has done a lot better than it used to be. Our roads, hospitals, and schools have gotten better. And this job creation programme is a huge one but what I want to appeal to government to do more. I will also appeal to our people to cooperate with the Government to stop crime in our society. A situation where our people will see crime being committed against your own people and you aid and abet it is dangerous. But we will ask the government to do more in the direction of ensuring that insecurity is contained because in a situation of insecurity, you achieve nothing and the ones you have previously achieved, will vanish.

'Job Creation Scheme Has Taken Youths Off the Streets'

- HRM Dr. Emmanuel E. Sideso, Abe 1, JP, OON, Ovie Of Uvwie Kingdom

The state government has in the past five years trained and established over 5,000 youths through STEP and YAGEP in vocational skills and agriculture. what is your take on that?

It is true that His Excellency, Senator Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, Governor of Delta State came with the slogan of prosperity for all Deltans. As part of efforts to achieve that noble goal, he introduced STEP and YAGEP targeted at the youth of Delta State. The programmes are designed in such a way that the youth are trained on relevant vocations and agriculture and given Starter Packs. Through these processes, many Delta youths have been taken out of the streets. Some of them have become employers of labour.

How has the State Government's job creation impacted on your people?

'An idle mind is the devil's workshop' is a popular adage of our people. Unemployment breeds criminality. As part of efforts to curb insecurity in the State, the Governor has embarked on many job creation programmes like the STEP and YAGEP, and many others affecting women. In fact, there is a Special Adviser on Job Creation in the State. The impact of the job creation programmes in the State is glaring for everyone to see.

Criminality and insecurity in the state has been reduced to a manageable level in the Uvwie and Warri Metropolitan axis. Armed robbery has reduced and the kidnapping curve has flattened. The Delta State economy is better off especially business at the small scale or petty trade level.

What is your assessment of the programme?

My assessment is that it is a success story so far. I am not saying that the government cannot do better. But with the little available resources at the disposal of the government, they



OVIE OF UWWIE

deserve some accolades.

Rate the job creation programme.

I will give the government B+ rating. A very good performance.

What areas do you want the job creation programme to improve?

There are still a reasonable number of youths especially graduates on the street due to lack of employment. Government needs to broaden and expand its youth empowerment programmes to accommodate more graduates.

What are your suggestions to improve the programme?

Traditional rulers should be given more roles in selecting nominees for the job creation programmes. This will eliminate the political coloration which critics usually cite. I advise the government to remain focussed and do what they know how best to do – prosperity for all Deltans.

'Job Creation Scheme Has Impacted Positively on My People'

- Olu of Warri

Perception on job creation scheme

The Delta State Government programme tagged Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) and Youth Agricultural

Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP), in the past five years are very successful and key programmes of government that have somehow reduced youth unemployment in Warri Kingdom in particular and the state in general. The programmes are designed to cater for a wide variety of skills, including but not limited to catering and confectionery, fashion design, textiles design, cosmetology, information technology, fish farming, and poultry that can be acquired by youths of the state within two to eight months depending on the choice of enterprise.

At the end of their training, they become employers of labour, thereby help to reduce unemployment in the society which in turn will hopefully reduce social vices. My take therefore is that the programmes be sustained for the benefit of our people. The job creation has impacted positively on our people. In Egbokodo town, Warri South LGA, we have a massive fish farm that has provided the requisite skills for the youth of the town and its environs to develop and acquire skills and also create jobs for the people.

Way forward for the scheme

My assessment of the programme is that it is very laudable and should be sustained in all ramifications. The job creation programme has done very well; I can with all modesty score the programme 70%. I will advise the State Government to increase the number of participants.



HRM OGIAIME IKENWOLI

Also, the traditional rulers should be involved in the recruitment of trainees just as the trainees should be placed under strict guidelines and supervision to combat the sale of Starter Packs by beneficiaries after graduating. The State Government should also make provision for more training centres across the three Warri LGAs, especially in the Warri South area."

'Delta State Job Creation Office Deserves Kudos'

- Pere of Akugbene Mein, His Majesty, S.PL Kalanama VIII

Knowledge of the programme

I have an idea about the Job Creation Scheme of the Delta State Government because during the inauguration of the programme, which includes Skill Training and Entrepreneurs Programme (STEP) and Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) by Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, I was there in my capacity as a traditional ruler and Second Vice-Chairman of Delta State Council of Traditional Rulers. Also, during the recruitment of new intakes into the programme, I was asked to select those to participate in my locality/kingdom. So, I can point to a number of beneficiaries of the programme who are now self employed and have equally employed other persons.

Assessing the programme in the past five years

There has been a steady growth in the STEP and YAGEP programmes. The number of unemployed young men and women that have benefited from the programme is quite enormous. If not for the Covid-19 pandemic that has slowed down the success and tempo of economic activities in the State and country in general, by now more persons might have been added into the programme, if that has not been done already.

But so far, there is a trajectory; there is a steady increase in the number of unemployed persons that have graduated from the programme and the curve is still increasing. We hope that the economy normalizes now that the Covid-19 pandemic is gradually receding so that they can bring in more persons into the programme and help to take our youths out from the streets.

Areas of improvement on the programme

The area that needs improvement, for me, is an increment in the value of Starter Packs made available to the trainees. For example, for those who learnt tailoring and hair-dressing, the

amount given to them as start off initial capital/cash should be reasonable enough to enable them to buy the tools and implements they require since the cost of acquiring some of the equipment needed to run the enterprise is on the high side.

If it requires reducing the number of participants, to enable facilitators select a fewer number of participants, it will be more impactful. I think it is better for a fewer number of beneficiaries to get enough cash as Starter Packs to start off their business and achieve optimum level of operation in the business. It is better than giving out small amounts of money to a large number of participants who may at the end of the day run away with the money without achieving the purpose for which the programme was set out to achieve.

Drawback of the programme

I don't know of any drawback or set back that the programme is experiencing. For me, the programme is running smoothly. To the best of my knowledge, the handlers of the programme deserve my commendation because they are putting in their best. The participants of the scheme have spoken glowingly about the handlers of the programme, saying the dexterity and enthusiasm exhibited in the execution of the scheme has contributed to the success recorded so far.

Quality and acceptability of the products

I know that there are standards set out by the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) whose responsibility it is to rate the processed food items in the country. It is only when the manufacturers pass the quality and standards for such products that they are approved for consumption as well as allowed for export.

So, if the products of the beneficiaries of the Job Creation Office did not pass that standard test, principally, they would not have been allowed to be exported. I want to believe that products of the job creation scheme meet local and international standards, especially, the products of shoe making, tailoring and the processed food items, like garri, yam flours and spices. I believe they were subjected to rigorous tests by SON. That is why they could be exported to foreign countries as commodities from Delta State. The manufacturers are doing very well and making steady progress.

Remedy for absconding participants

The general perception of human beings is that government projects are no body's responsibility and that government money is everybody's money. This is very wrong and unacceptable. However, there is no way you can control it and achieve hundred percent result. Take for instance, those who travel to Israel on pilgrimage for spiritual renewal, you find that most time, instead of achieving that aim, there are some pilgrims who before they depart, have a mindset of absconding to other countries as soon as they arrive in Israel.



So my advice for individuals that have a mindset of running away with the Starter Packs of the job creation programme soon after graduation is that they should not jeopardize the chances of others who are genuinely interested in the programme. If they know they are not willing to undergo the process of the training, they should not enroll. This unfortunate act jeopardises the chances of others who are genuinely interested in the programme. The skills imparted on the young men and women are precious and would ordinarily cost a lot of money to acquire privately. The ventures of those who have successfully set up their businesses are living proof that STEP and YAGEP are having multiplier effects on the economy. It has shown that after learning and getting the Starter Pack, and if you excel, there is every tendency that those behind you can also benefit from the process. So, my advice is that anybody who is not willing to follow the process to the end should step aside for those who are ready to take it up.

Continuity of job creation scheme after Okowa

The truth of the nature of politicians is that when they are campaigning, they will say, I will continue from where my predecessor stopped, particularly, if they are from the same political party. But once they are from the opposition party, during their campaign, they will begin to pick holes in these programmes. They will de-market the programme, but if somebody from within the same political party takes over from Okowa, then you can have the assurance of continuity of the programme but that is not a guarantee. So, my prayer is that whoever takes over from Governor Okowa should not have the mindset of jettisoning the job creation scheme because it has impacted positively on the lives of young Deltans in the past five years.

'The Job Creation Scheme Has Enabled Peace and Security in Delta State'

- Orodje of Okpe, His Majesty, Major-Gen. Felix Mujakperuo (rtd)

Knowledge about the job creation programme

I know about the job creation programme of this administration. It is one of innovative programmes of the S.M.A.R.T agenda of Governor Okowa's administration. I also know that it is a programme piloted by the Job Creation Office of this administration. I am aware the programme is aimed at getting the unemployed youths out of the street by getting them gainfully employed through skill acquisition and the graduates who have been empowered also employ other people. When the programme started, I used to be part of it. We were usually invited to Sapele, which is part of my kingdom. I witnessed the ceremony.

Appraisal of job creation scheme

I know there are a lot of participants in my community, but it is difficult to keep a tab on them after the graduates have left their training centres as I don't have the facilities to monitor the

graduates. It is only the government that can do that because they have their data. I know from the government angle; the graduates are being monitored and their success recorded.

The successes recorded by previous participants are usually made known to us when new participants are brought in for another round of training. It is during this time that the successes of the previous trainees are highlighted for the benefits of the audience. It is during this official ceremony of inducting new trainees that we know how the graduates have succeeded by way of displaying their products, like the shoes, the farm produces, and fish.

General assessment of the job creation scheme

To me, the job creation policy of the Okowa administration is a huge success. Like I said before, it has not only provided job for the youth in the State, it has also helped in ensuring that there is peace and security in the State because, when the minds of the youth are not engaged, it becomes a fertile ground for mischief. So, it has assisted in not only creating jobs and employment, the multiplier effect is that those who have been trained also train and employ other people. The Government of Okowa has not only provided the enabling environment, but it has also gone a step further by providing the youth the wherewithal to become employers of labour. The job creation programme is a big success.

Areas of improvement on the scheme

Like I said before, we do not have the mechanism or machinery to monitor the successes or otherwise of the scheme, but I know that during the induction of new trainees into the programme, we were told how a young man who was trained in fashion design was already exporting his wares overseas. That is a big success. Somebody that was trained by the government, empowered to start his own business, is already employing other people, and exporting his products to foreign countries is a great achievement.

I am also aware of the successes recorded in agriculture, an area which I think is very important for any nation to be food sufficient. You know, any nation that cannot feed itself is in trouble, because the issue of food is a problem to developing nations. This job creation programme has rekindled the interest in the youth to go into agriculture. I know a lot of my subjects who are youths have embraced this programme.

Despite the successes recorded, the failure rate is something that must be investigated. Some of the youths go into the programme with great enthusiasm, only for them to fail in not being able to manage their business properly.

In fact, it is necessary that the participants should be monitored on a frequent basis to enable the government know how they are performing because it is not enough for the government to hand them Starter Packs, but if they are monitored, mentored



HIS ROYAL MAJESTY ORHUE 1 MAJOR-GEN
FELIX MUJAKPERUO RTD CFR MNI
ORODJE OF OKPE KINGDOM

and government knows the challenges they are having, it will go a long way in improving the programme. Besides monitoring, the government should also assist the participants with bank loan with reasonable interest rate to enable them to increase their production.

Product quality and standards

The State Government should ensure that the products of the scheme are of international standards so that they can favourably compete with similar products from other countries. If you just package garri or yam and other products that are not of international standards, then we are not adding value to our primary products and the income accruing to the young men and women will be limited.

'Replicating Job Creation Model in Other States Is A Welcome Development'

- Obi of Ubulu –Unor

In the beginning

Let me first thank His Excellency, Senator Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, Governor of Delta State, for all he has been doing in the State, especially on this issue of youth empowerment and job creation. I know that the schemes, YAGEP and STEP programmes were introduced to see how the government can improve the standard of living of the youth who are unemployed because of the poor state of Nigeria's economy. With the introduction of the programme in 2016, I think a lot has been achieved.

Let us start from the early beginning. When they want to select participants, I still remember, they made us, the royal fathers, to assist in the selection process to enable the government to know those who are fit and proper for the programme. After the selection exercise, the beneficiaries were empowered to be on their own. It has been a success story because I am aware that some of them are now well established and have also set up their own outfits. Not only that, they have also trained some persons who now are beneficiaries of the programme.

Impact of the programme on the people

No doubt, the job creation programme of the State Government is having great impact. It is also having multiplier effects not just on the socio-economic lives of the beneficiaries but on the entire State. I say this because those who participated in the scheme have shown great strength in applying what they have



Obi of UBULU-UNOR

learnt by establishing their own business and they have equally trained others who in turn established their own outfits. The value chain is very high, in the sense that it has also created employment to the hitherto unemployed youths of the State who were roaming the streets.

Continuity of the programme

It will be of great socio-economic and political relevance if the job creation scheme is institutionalized, to give room for continuity. This can be achieved by ensuring that those who participate in the programme are profiled in such a way to ensure that they have the capacity to sustain the programme, and the executors of the programme should put measures in place to screen out those who are likely to abandon or abscond after collecting Starter Packs from government. Government should also put legislation in place to ensure the continuity of the programme as it has become a veritable process for creating job opportunities for the youth. I will like the programme to be sustained even after the term of this administration.

Competition

If other states or establishments are copying the Delta State model of job creation programme to solve the problem of unemployment, it will be a welcome development. I am not of the view that if our job creation model is copied and replicated in other states, that it will bring competition. No. Rather, I see it as a means of ensuring that the scheme is further improved, refined, fine-tuned and products from beneficiaries made more competitive. I do not see any negativity from that point; rather it will make us to be stronger and be the master in what we are doing. It further goes to explain that Governor Okowa is a meticulous man.

International outlook

The essence of the job creation scheme is not only to create job opportunities for unemployed youths but basically, to produce items that will be acceptable for consumption in both local and international markets. With the team Governor Okowa has assembled to head and pilot the affairs of the job creation office, I have no doubt that they will put in their best to guarantee a good result.

'STEP and YAGEP Have Impacted on Rural Communities'

— **Ovie of Ozoro, His Royal Majesty, Barrister Anthony U. Ogbogbo**

Your views on the job creation scheme

Before Governor Ifeanyi Okowa come on board, he made it very clear that he wanted to embark on strategic wealth creation to provide jobs and create and sustain businesses. His main objective was to make families comfortable. He thought of ensuring that a peaceful environment became imperative, to give the multi-nationals a peaceful environment upon which to operate. Through this process of ensuring a peaceful environment for the businesses to operate, he has generated wealth and jobs for the people of Delta State.

He went further to establish the Job Creation Scheme - called



STEP and YAGEP - with a view to encouraging the establishment of micro and small-scale enterprises in the State to empower the youth. This gave rise to the need to empower the youths through skill acquisition and today, we are all happy and proud of this initiative of the government, which has engaged a lot of youths in the State and some of these participants are all settled in their various businesses and vocations.

Impact of the Scheme

Governor Okowa's main target is to impact positively on the rural dwellers, the vulnerable, women and the physically challenged. To me, he has greatly impacted on the people because in capacity building and vocational training, I have a lot of my subjects that are beneficiaries and are established as entrepreneurs.

Rating of the programme

From the available statistics in the public domain, the Governor has scored very high in skill entrepreneurship training and which will earn him 70 percent. He has tried in this area because the impact is being felt all over the State.

Don't forget, this score is anchored on the level of peace in the State which has enabled businesses to flourish. If there is no peaceful environment, businesses will not go on. Without the peaceful environment, he would not have achieved that much in the job creation programme that is currently on going.

In all, I appreciate the Governor for the wealth and job creation, for ensuring a peaceful environment for businesses to thrive. The Governor's security aides have been in this kingdom to settle matters that would have resulted into break down of law and order, and I am impressed the way the matters were resolved.

Suggestions

The government has done very well, but I think the governor should re-jig or bring in more hands with fresh blood into the system. Also, the operators of the programme appear to be concentrating on some areas to the detriment of other areas. They should ensure that the programme is spread to all areas of the State.

Another area of setback the government must investigate is the issue of absconding of beneficiaries of the programme. I understand that some of the participants after receiving their Starter Packs ran away with the funds and machineries made available to them. However, these bad eggs should not discourage the government from continuing with the programme because among the people, there must be deviants. It must be said, however, that the number of these deviants are quite small and to use it to assess the overall performance of the programme is wrong.

‘Delta Job Creation Doing Us Good Economically, Socially and Religiously’

—Delta State CAN Chairman

BY MERCY ENOCH

The Delta State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has benefitted from the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Programme and has come to the conclusion that the programme has done its members and the people of the State good economically, socially and religiously.

The association speaking through its chairman, Apostle Sylvanus Okorote, had this to say when the *Okowaplus* Team visited him in his office in Asaba, recently: “Economically, some persons are now employing others. They can make income. Surely, the programme has taken the beneficiaries out of the streets and given us more peace because the more the youth get out of the streets, and are meaningfully employed, the more the peace we can enjoy in our society”.

Economically, he said that the programme has also impacted on the churches. “For instance, the youth from my



APOSTLE SYLVANUS OKOROTE, CHAIRMAN,
DELTA STATE CHAPTER OF THE CHRISTIAN
ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (CAN)

church, who have been trained and are self-employed are now able to pay tithes no matter how small the tithe is. These youth were previously not used to paying tithes. That is why I said that the programme is beneficial to the church

of God as a body.

“Not just the church but also the Government because the various Local Government Councils across the State, where the beneficiaries are located, now go to their shops to collect taxes. So, the programme is aiding the payment of taxes by the youth. When they were jobless, they never contributed to the development of the State in terms of paying taxes.

The beneficiaries are the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of their various enterprises and their businesses are registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). This makes it easy for them to pay their taxes and as well qualify to benefit from numerous government's policies meant for business entities operating in the state and country at large.”

Okorote stated that the programme has touched the social lives of the beneficiaries as it helps them to focus on God and stay away from gangs. Being employed, he said, helps them to appreciate God and life.

“The programme is doing us good economically, socially and religiously because youths get really difficult to manage when they don't have some of the things they need. Especially the boys, when they don't have anything doing to earn a living, they are difficult to manage.”

He described the benefits of the programme as so great that it has endeared the Governor to the Youth Wing Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN), which during their last year convention gave the Governor an award to appreciate him for excellent job done in this regard.

Despite economic downturn, Gov Okowa gave beneficiaries higher level of empowerment in 2020

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) ravaged the economies of the world from late 2019 into 2020 and Nigeria as a country was not an exception. The effects of COVID-19 coupled with crash in crude oil price led to the slashing of the nations' and states' budgets. Delta State was not an

exception as the 2020 budget was reviewed downward to reflect the economic reality on ground. Notwithstanding the Delta State Government's downsizing of its budget, it still empowered the beneficiaries even higher this year.

According to Okorote, “this year, the level of empowerment that they got after their training has been much more than what they used to get. For instance, this year, they had some amount of money that was enough for them, depending on where they came from (that's location of business). The soft loan is for them to rent shops and other things for their products. That means that there is a step-up, a higher grade of empowerment of those that were trained.”

He revealed that CAN as a body has benefitted more from the Green-STEP and Brown-STEP and that they have been greatly beneficial to the youth. He said that the association

got 100 slots in 2018 and 30 slots in 2019. “In 2020,” he disclosed “we had slots for both Green and Brown-STEP. There were some persons that have gotten some skills. So, they were taken for Brown-STEP. The empowerment level in 2020 was higher than all the other years. So, the beneficiaries have been quite happy as the slots were shared right from Local Government level of the association.”

Few slots for YAGEP

Meanwhile, he said that the association has not

benefitted much from the Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP) as only about five slots have been given to it. “I remember at a time, we have like five slots or so on tomatoes farming,” he explained. “I am sure that at least 60 to 70 percent of those that have been trained are into full practice of the skills they've been trained in, especially those that benefitted from the Brown-STEP. They put themselves into that training, so there's no way they would run away from it. What they needed was the government's assistance and they just got the assistance. Some of them have employed one or two persons and are training others. So, there's a multiplying effect of the skills acquisition and empowerment programme.”

“This year, the level of empowerment that they got after their training has been much more than what they used to get.”

He revealed that as a result of what other youths have seen with those who have benefitted from Brown-STEP, they have enlisted themselves in private outreaches to get the skills, waiting for the Brown-STEP opportunity to come.

"There are many of them like that, who have put themselves in Hair Dressing Salon, Barbing Salon, Information Communication Technology (ICT) just waiting for the opportunity of Brown-STEP," he said.

Delta youths embracing skills because oil economy has failed to address unemployment

Despite Delta State being rich with crude oil, the oil economy has failed to address the unemployment situation in the State, hence the youth of the State are embracing the Job and Wealth Creation Programme of the State Government.

"The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) has moved out of Delta State and that wasn't in Okowa's tenure. It happened before he came. Chevron is operating but at a very minimal level. Their impact on the lives of the people is no more felt. Many of the companies in the wake of 1999/2000 to 2001 crises in Warri, relocated out of the State. So, those benefits we used to have from the presence of the oil companies economically is not there again. It's not even in Warri. You don't see it. So, that's why they are embracing these things (skills and empowerment programme). We appreciate the governor for bringing this option of entrepreneurship."

Appeal to the youth

The CAN Chairman believes that today's world is ruled by the private sector through entrepreneurship. He therefore urged the youths not to consider their humble beginning as not good enough. "You must start from somewhere - get the training, get empowerment by the State Government and take off from there. Yes, you need hard work. You need to put in some pain and patience; you need financial discipline. Once these are there, the sky is the limit for such persons. That's what China has done. That's what Dubai has

done and that's what Germany has done. We hear about developed countries; it's all about entrepreneurship."

To those who have accessed the programme, the CAN boss appealed to them to be serious with it as it would make them employers of labour, which he said is the best place for them rather than being employees.

He commended the Chief Job Creation Officer of the State, Prof Eric Eboh, for the passion with which he approaches his work, saying, "It is an uncommon passion and discipline that he places on the job. He has a passion for it and my prayer is that with that kind of passion, God will use him to raise more persons for His Excellency."

Advice to parents of beneficiaries

He urged the parents of the beneficiaries to support them morally and financially and in whichever way they could to ensure they make their mark, adding, "I know of many people who have made their mark and the feat could have been impossible without parents' support."

"We appreciate the Governor for bringing this option of Entrepreneurship."

To the youth who have not benefitted from the programme, the clergy enjoined them to join many others who have engaged themselves in skills acquisition and skills training, so that they can get trained and await the opportunity of being empowered. "It may not be government but an uncle or aunt, brother or sister

could support him/her to start up the enterprise. I have done this on my own in my church before this programme came. I got people to learn tailoring, barbing and empowered them with one or two machines and then they started off," he said.

He also appealed to well-to-do persons in the society on the importance of getting the youths out of the unemployment market.

"Whatever you can do to assist, if you get one person or two out of unemployment and start them doing something, God will record it for you and you would have helped the society a lot," he concluded.



CURRENTLY AT CONSTRUCTION STAGE



DELTA STATE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PARK, ABOH OGWASHI-UKU