

KEYNOTE ADDRESS PRESENTED BY PROF. (HIGH CHIEF) CASMIAR OBIALOM (JP), PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, ABCF-CBN-EDC PROGRAMME, NORTH CENTRAL ZONE & FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, MINNA OUTREACH CENTRE AT THE 1ST AFRICAN YOUTH VIRTUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNU RCES ORGANIZED BY RCE MINNA, NIGERIA IN COLLABORATION WITH RCE GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, USA ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 2016 IN MINNA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

1. PREAMBLE:-

The **Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE)**, Minna, Nigeria has this day, Wednesday, 3rd August, 2016, in collaboration with RCE Grand Rapids Michigan, USA, organized this momentous conference on the theme “**A Regional Perspective on Youth Empowerment and Vocational Training**” to bring together young people from African continent to confabulate on ways of tackling youth unemployment and climate change through Technical and Vocational Training Education, Entrepreneurship, Climate Change and Lifelong Learning on African Development.

By the Grace of God, I serve as the **Programme Director, African Community Bridge Foundation (ACBF) - Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) - Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) Programme, North-Central Zone and Federal Capital Territory, Minna Outreach Centre**. It is always said that experience is the best teacher. I am therefore here to share my experience in the subject to add value to the conference for lasting solution to the problems.

2. THE PROBLEMS:-

The problems are that:-

- (i) Oil can no longer sustain the Nigerian economy;
- (ii) Chronic dependence on mono-economy affects our development;
- (iii) The system produces graduates on daily basis without plans for them;
- (iv) Most of the industries are closed and no new ones are built. We rather continue to establish more schools, colleges and universities.
- (v) Most governments have placed embargoes on employment for over twenty years now;
- (vi) Youths roam round the streets and indulge in social vices, as idle mind is the devil's workshop.

In an attempt to solve these problems, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) established Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs) Programme in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria to tackle the menace of youth unemployment and to promote entrepreneurship.

3. OBJECTIVES:-

The objectives of the CBN-EDC Programme include:-

- (i) To check youth unemployment and social vices;
- (ii) To encourage youth civic engagement for national development and lasting democracy;
- (iii) To promote private-public partnership for entrepreneurial development;
- (iv) To diversity the economy for progress;

(v) Among others.

4. **SCOPE**:-

The programme is designed mostly for unemployed youth, but also suitable for every Nigerian who may wish to acquire skills to tackle the challenges of the economic crunch.

5. **METHODOLOGY**:-

The participants undergo **two-month intensive class work and one-month internship** (or as agreed) on the skills in line with the CBN-EDC Programme curriculum.

The programme is technical and requires specialized training. We have Trainer-Specialists who handle the participants in the various skills in order to achieve the expected results. Over forty skills are available and a beneficiary is empowered in one skill during the programme.

The activities include matriculation, orientation, brainstorming, continuous assessments, monitoring, call up, business plan writing, formation into co-operative societies, launch of and enlisting into Community Peace Network (CPN), graduation, etc. The beneficiaries are given the EDC certificates and starter packs, adequately monitored to forestall diversion, after graduation.

6. **INNOVATION**:-

Similar programmes have taken place in Nigeria but CBN-EDC Programme is unique for the following reasons:

(i) It encourages creativity, self-reliance and self-actualization.

- (ii) It enhances governments-citizens participation, eradicates marginalization, reduces poverty and builds peace.
- (iii) It opens numerous windows of finance for entrepreneurial development and provides access to the CBN's N220b for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development.
- (iv) It creates room for ancillary activities for youth empowerment and national development

7. IMPLEMENTATION:-

- (i) Minna Outreach Centre of the programme is located at former Works Training School, Old Secretariat, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.
- (ii) **African Community Bridge Foundation (ACBF)** is the implementing Agency of the programme for North Central Zone and Federal Capital Territory.
- (iii) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Development is the Implementing Ministry for the programme in Niger State.
- (iv) The programme is successful in Niger State with the commendable co-operation of ACBF, CBN and Niger State Government.

8. CONCLUSION:-

The on-going CBN-EDC Programme is a role model for entrepreneurial development and poverty alleviation. The model has produced young entrepreneurs who are not only presently self-employed but are also employers of labour. As an established platform in this direction, we welcome partners in this germane struggle to empower the youth through entrepreneurship.