

Agro-tourism wonder in Ondo State:As Mimiko turns jungle to city ,Employs 1,087 graduate.

by Wale Ojo, Tribune.



Dr Olusegun Mimiko (arrowed) demonstrating how to weed at Ore Sunshine settlement, Odigbo Local Government, Ondo, recently

Not every man is imbued with power of vision and clarity of purpose. Not every man has the gift of turning stone to bread. Not every man who is fortunate to be in the position of authority has the intellectual capacity to make things happen. But there are the few, the very few ones who are not only the deep but who are called to the deep. And they are deep.

These few ones do not make noise, neither do they construct their thinking and workings on the pages of newspaper, rather, they are

genuinely committed to writing their names and engraving their deeds in the consciousness of their generation and generations yet unborn, not by embarking on vainglorious and cosmetics projects which are easily eroded and washed away by the elements and time, but by thinking deep and bringing forth earth-shaking and transcendental programmes that empower and mobilise wealth, thereby bailing the masses from the shameful prison of poverty, rejection and wretchedness

One of such men is Dr Olusegun Rahman Mimiko, the governor of Ondo State, who has been faithful to the covenant he made with the people of the state.

Like the great men of old, who approached the business of government with stoic seriousness of purpose and selfless determination of ensuring the total liberation of their people beyond the conceptual imagination of men, Dr Mimiko has taken the gauntlet of bearing the burden to end the malaise of backwardness, underdevelopment and joblessness in Ondo State.

His template for projects implementation is solid, bearing in mind that the sun that shines in Ondo State must be harnessed not just with mindless propaganda or fake promises but with fundamentally sustainable trans-generational projects and indelible dividends of democracy.

Take any area of development, his approach of execution and manner of delivery has been not only revolutionary but phenomenally futuristic.

His Mother and Child Hosipital concept (Abiye), the Mega School project, the 3i's initiative, the neighborhood market, are all excitingly confounding, out-of-the-box transformational products of a genius.

His standards and benchmarks on projects are always higher, thus making him tower above his peers, some of who have no leadership content but find themselves in the saddle of authority.

Having a clear understanding of the historical occupational trend of his people which is agro based, he decided to break away from the traditional concept of entrenching peasantry by doling out meager farm implements and other allied agro supportive articles and commodities in the name of empowering the farmers. He studied Chief Obafemi Awolowo model of farms settlements and saw it as a veritable instrument to conquer poverty, create wealth and jobs.

The beauty of Awolowo's farm settlement model does not only lie in its capacity of generating greater produce but also in creating wealth, empowering people, generating mass employment opportunities, stimulating tourism activities and most importantly urbanising the jungle.

He also realised that the farm settlements, if well tuned, could be used to produce job creators, particularly among the thousands of unemployed graduates, who litter the streets of the state after years of harrowing academic experiences at their various tertiary institutions.

Dr Mimiko, in the spirit of his Caring Heart ideology and under the Ondo State Wealth Creation Agency (WECA), being managed by Prince Bisi Adegoke, inaugurated three farms settlements in Epe, (Ondo Central), Auga (Ondo North) and Ore (Ondo South Senatorial districts). Each of these three farms caters for the agricultural peculiarities of its district.

The Mimiko Farm Settlement is a bit unique and differs from the old concept. It pools his farmers not among the traditional farmers but from the sea of hitherto unemployed graduates who applied through the Ondo State Wealth Creation Agency (WECA). These set of employees were not labourers as the case is in other states where unemployed graduates were recruited, saddled them with brooms, hoes and cutlasses and set to clear and clean the expressway as if they were slaves.

The 1087 graduates engaged by Dr Mimiko are being trained to acquire entrepreneurial skills in agro-related businesses of their interest with a view to becoming job creators and millionaires in no distant time.

The beautiful part of the story is the way the scheme was structured, whereby the employed graduates are participants and co-owners of the farm.

The government provided the land, the inputs, accommodation in the village and monthly stipends for the participants' upkeep, while the participants tend their farms, nurture their birds and ensure the survival of their fingerlings. During the harvest, the participants will go home with the profits, while the capital is injected back into the business.

A tour of the Ore Farm Settlement, at Odigbo Local Government Area of the state, is a testimony to the fact that Dr Mimko did his home work well and also got the right person,

Adegoke, who shares his vision and understands the concept of wealth creation properly. This is because, it is one thing for a leader to have a vision about a project, it is another for his followers to comprehend that vision, interpret and help to actualize it well.

The result of this is that, in the past eight months, WECA had cleared about 10 thousands hectares of land in the thick jungle of Ore along Ore–Ijebu Ode–Lagos expressway, with three major agricultural pursuits; fishery; poultry and arable farming.

In the jungle, Dr Mimiko ensured that super chalets built to taste were constructed for the accommodation of the participants with provision of a bore hole, DSTV, with two sets of plasma TVs, two generators, table tennis and other games facilities for recreation. The participants have been able to plant over 6000 hectares of maize, over 1million palm seedlings and also over 1000 hectares of cassava.

The poultry section has about 30 large pens made up of three cubicles each, with over 700 layers and breeders, while the fishery has over 2000 large fish ponds with the least harbouring 2500 fingerlings.

The farm has a large man-made dam which the participant christened Iroko Dam, the appellation of Dr Mimiko.

Speaking with the Tribune Tourism Magazine Crew, Mr Anthony Fadipe, who is addressed as Captain, described the farm settlement as” a city in the jungle planted by Dr Mimiko to build the future of Ondo state.”

Fadipe, who studied Forestry in Ibadan, explained that “Even Dr Mimiko might believe the scheme is just to create employment, but now almost everyone here has determined not to search for employment but to create jobs. Let us say just 900 of us from this farm alone settled down to create jobs which engage a minimum of six persons and that is the least Just imagine us producing different farm products which are sold in the market. See what will happen to the economy and development in the state? And these are the people who would otherwise have been roaming the streets aimless.” The Lord that gave Mimiko this vision will continued to sustain him in the saddle. If you know the import of this scheme and the psychological relief it offered us, then you will join us in appreciation of a man of ingenuity.”

Fadipe further disclosed that “before now, some of us here had lost hope in life. Who would not, in such a dire situation, where you suffered to go to school, you passed out in bright colors and you were lost in the concrete jungle of unemployment for years? And just as you were thinking you were finished in life, then someone came out of the blues and offered you hope, not just hope of living but a hope of making it great and preventing people from having such debilitating experience of yours? This is what Dr Mimiko has done for us and we shall be eternally grateful to him.”

Lending his voice, Mr Vincent Olumuyiwa, a graduate, who studied Chemistry at the Obafemi Awolowo University said what I appreciate most is the sense of candor” which Dr Mimiko and

his agency added to this scheme. We are not treated as beggars who have no choice. Nothing was forced down on our throats. We chose the areas where we had interest and capacity to excel. We are also being grilled in the art of business management and financial control. You will see this is not just one of the programs or scheme meant for cheap propaganda and ephemeral popularity. We are co-owners of this venture, hence there is no way it will not be sustainable. I am into fishery and I can tell you that I already have my blueprint establishing one of the biggest fish farm villages in Ondo State.”

Another participant, Mr. Victor Akinfolase, a graduate of Psychology from the University of Ado –Ekiti, said ‘ I am sure my colleagues would have talked about the effects and usefulness of this scheme. Apart from these, what also endeared the scheme to me is the farm environment which makes you a proud farmer entrepreneur in training. Have a look at the environment, It stimulates, it encourages. It is dignifying and presentable, almost everything needed in a city is provided here. We have two generators, we have a recreation centre equipped with games like Ayo, table tennis, two plasma TVs and DSTV.

Our rooms are quite large enough with conveniences. And to cap it all, Dr Mimiko has promised to help in making sure we all realise our dreams of not only making it big but in becoming job creators.”

As the Tribune Tourism Magazine concluded the tour of the farm, Mr Fadipe said “Let it be known all over the world that we have a man here whose name is Dr Rahman Olusegun Mimiko, a man of rare vision, who is striving hard to breed and model a generation of job creators and future multi-millionaire entrepreneurs, who will transform the economic landscape of Ondo State in particular and the nation at large.

And I tell you, if Dr Mimiko is given the support to nurture his wealth creation scheme to maturity in the next few years, I bet you, Ondo will be the state to beat in terms of wealth creation, employment generation and mass production of agriculture produce. This is because, under him, the sunshine is shining brightly and we all love this sun to shine forever.”

As we logged out of the Ore farm Settlement which has reaped over one thousands unemployed graduates from the streets, building them to become job creators instead of job seekers in an environment which is comparable to an estate in the city, a song waxed by the late Dr Hurbert Ogunde, where he eulogised Chief Obafemi Awolowo on his farm settlements projects, oozed out of one of the Radio Stations, that “ Oba to so igbo di ilu ayeye ko le gbagbe,’ (The masses will never forget in a hurry, the ruler that turns a jungle into a city).

So be it with Dr Olusegun Mimiko, the man popularly called Iroko who has turned the thick jungle of Ore into an eldorado.

Take a tour of the sunshine farm settlement in Ore and you will bow to the power of superior vision.