

## **ODSG Declares Nov. 29th Artisans Day, Disburses N280m... To Send Artisans To India For Training**

Ondo State Governor, Dr Olusegun Mimiko on Monday blazed the trail in the annals of the 34 year-old State with the flagging off of the first-ever loan scheme for artisans with the disbursement of N280 million to 3,396 artisans across the State under the Special Transformative Artisan Repositioning Scheme (STARS) programme of his administration.

Under this innovative scheme, tipper lorries, fault detecting machines, grinding machines, drums of carbide and welding machines totaling 264 were distributed to artisans across the 18 local government areas of the state to act as buffer to the local artisans as a means of boosting small scale enterprises and provision of jobs for the people of the State.

Similarly, the state government also declared 29th November every year as Artisans Day in Ondo State with an assurance that it will next year sponsor some artisans to India for training to sharpen their skills in order to improve on the practice of their trade.

Dr Mimiko, who disclosed that the loan would only attract 9 per cent interest rate with a one year moratorium, disclosed that some groups like the Butchers Association would receive their loan disbursement en-bloc because of their cohesiveness.

His words: "This I must say is a test case. Their faithfulness in the distribution among members of the groups and the repayment thereafter shall definitely determine the size of their next tranche of loan.

"Artisans are an important factor in the stimulation of economic activities across the length and breadth of the state. They are the engine room for industrial development. The scheme is designed in such that soft loans and equipment are given to artisans in order to motivate them to work harder, be more dedicated and expand their business because artisans of all grades and categories form a major force in our society and economy.

"Again, this policy initiative of this administration was designed to cater for artisans who have completed their apprenticeship training but could not practice their trade due to lack of funds as well as those that are in the trade but need financial empowerment for better performance.

"Loan disbursement under this scheme is specifically designed to favour clusters of artisans that are homogenous and cohesive for easy monitoring and loan recovery. This is to encourage cross-guarantee among the artisans belonging to a common cluster group, promote better understanding and to encourage peaceful industrial harmony that will engender rapid industrial development.

"In past years, artisan development has been relegated to the background and as a direct result, majority of our youths now engage in quick money making ventures such as Motorcycle Riding (OKADA) and Telephone Vending (GSM) among others to the detriment of specialisation in artisanship. Through this initiative, we believe it will reposition their level of productivity and encourage them to improve the quality of their products and services.

“Our commitment and determination to liberate the people from poverty manifest in all our efforts since assumption of office. We are not just going to alleviate poverty, but to eradicate it, generate employment and create wealth as a platform for better performance” Mimiko assured.

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