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New UK-partnered project will spark entrepreneurialism and boost economic growth for a generation of Nigerians

More than one million young Nigerians are being given the opportunity to develop business and leadership skills, thanks to a new UK-partnered project. The initiative is believed to be one of the largest projects of its kind in Nigeria and could help the country to increase its place in the global economy.

The Association of Business Executives (ABE) and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Read and Earn Federation have joined forces to support the next generation of young entrepreneurs in Nigeria by creating a world-class online programme, which will develop the core skills they'll need to set up their own businesses.

On Friday (10 May) representatives from ABE and the UNESCO Read and Earn Federation celebrated the partnership at a prestigious event in Westminster. The event was attended by Nigerian regional royalty, Commonwealth Ambassadors and the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council. ABE's CEO, Rob May, was awarded with a 'Friend of UNESCO' title and ABE Fellowships were granted to several of the project's leaders.

Starting in August, the ABE course, which will be available to 120,000 young Nigerians a year over the next decade, includes bespoke content on strategic thinking, understanding and predicting customer behaviour, marketing, branding, product targeting, business planning and an emphasis on international trade. The course is designed to give participants all the tools required to become young entrepreneurs, to help them diversify and grow the Nigerian economy.

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy with a GDP of \$3.76 billion but its entrepreneurial deficit renders it unable to develop the broad-based economy needed to create employment and competition, as well as provide insulation from the global price and demand shocks in its natural resource markets.

The IMF predicts that Nigeria could become the ninth largest economy in the world by 2050 if it mobilises its 200 million population into a nation of entrepreneurs and consumers. But Nigeria's population advantage is also its downfall, as it struggles to overcome rising unemployment, poor education and severe poverty. By creating a programme focused on equipping young people with entrepreneurial skills, the project offers a solution to address these difficult conditions.

The 10-year project also gives young Nigerians membership to the world-renowned specialist membership body, The Institute of Leadership & Management. They'll have access to its flagship e-learning tool, MyLeadership, to use the interactive learning resources developed by The Institute's



experts. Members can enhance their knowledge of the practice of leadership, test themselves online against the Institute's leadership standards, receive personalised direction and have their leadership learning recognised through certification.

ABE CEO Rob May said: "Nigeria is a country at a crossroads. The fiscal deficit, unemployment trend and uncertainty around petrol prices all combine to create an atmosphere of economic instability. This uncertainty means that the West African nation has seen a significant out-flow of its most promising young talent to Europe, leaving behind a damaging human capital problem. This project, with partners UNESCO and The Institute of Leadership & Management will inspire a generation of Nigerian youths to become entrepreneurs and broaden the horizon of this proud nation."

Prince Abdulsalami, President of the UNESCO Read and Earn Federation, added: "This project, and this partnership, is now part of the road map to making Nigeria a successful and sustainable economy, and will help curb the conditions that lead to poverty, illegal migration, human trafficking and modern-day slavery."

Phil James, CEO of The Institute of Leadership & Management said: "The Institute of Leadership & Management is delighted to be working with ABE and UNESCO to support such a vital project for the education and empowerment of young people in Nigeria. We share ABE's values and belief that education has the potential to change people's lives and to advance peace and prosperity for society. Our studying membership will support everyone who achieves their ABE certificate by providing the opportunity for continuous learning and development of business management and leadership skills."

For more information about The Association of Business Executives, visit www.abeuk.com.

For more information the UNESCO Read and Earn Federation, visit www.unesco-re.org/about-us/

For more information about The Institute of Leadership & Management, visit www.institutelm.com.

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Notes to editors:

Rob May is available for interview. Please contact Pippa Hanson / Luke Aldridge at Camargue on phanson@camargue.uk / laldridge@camargue.uk or 01242 577277.

The [Association of Business Executives](http://www.abeuk.com) (ABE) is a not-for-profit organisation which provides internationally recognised business credentials.

ABE was founded with a clear social purpose to improve business education for aspiring entrepreneurs in developing countries. Today, 1.5 million people have mastered essential and advanced modern business concepts through studying for an ABE qualification, and ABE continues to



play a vital role in helping to diversify and grow economies, reducing inequality within and among countries.