A Boost for Local Content Policy

Contributed by Chris Ajaero
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ITL, an indigenous oil servicing company, establishes the first world class training centre for welders in the country

The Nigerian oil and gas industry recorded a milestone in the specialised areas of welding and quality control on Monday, December 12, when Inspection and Tests Nigeria Limited, ITL, an indigenous oil servicing company, formally opened its world class centre for welding inspection training and test in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Sam Azoka Onyechi, chief executive officer, CEO, of ITL, who performed the grand opening and commissioning of the centre, said the feat was achieved by his company in partnership with The Welding Institute, TWI, of Cambridge, United Kingdom. TWI is the world’s largest training organisation in welding inspection and non-destructive testing. Onyechi was optimistic that with the quality of training offered by the centre, local content would be enhanced as many Nigerians would acquire the relevant skills needed for employment in the leading oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. The joint partnership between ITL and TWI would change the face of the oil and gas industry because the centre boasts of the latest state-of-the art facilities procured from Lincoln, the world leader in welding technology. The centre will not only empower unskilled and even uneducated local Nigerians to secure plum jobs in the industry, but also ensure quality improvement in welded facilities thereby saving cost. In addition, it will enhance environmental safety through lessened pipe leaks and oil spills that have been the bane of the Niger Delta environment. “This is a giant leap in technology transfer because TWI is fully aware that Nigerian laws require transfer of skills in these areas to local Nigerians and are willing to teach Nigerians what they need to become industry specialists in welding and non-destructive testing,” Onyechi said. ITL will equally offer scholarship to select members of the Nigerian public, particularly Niger Delta people who may not be able to afford the professional fees for training at the centre. As part of its contribution towards assisting the federal government in capacity building, rehabilitation, and reintegration of ex-militants, Onyechi said that ITL would be willing to organise training programmes for them. To facilitate training at the centre, Tom Woolhouse, the West African regional manager of TWI, has been seconded to ITL to showcase to Nigerians the expertise of the world giant in welding and joining technology in capacity building in this specialised field. He would be working with other experts, including K. Arumugam, manager, training and testing, ITL, and Tomy George, trainer in welding. Woohouse later conducted guests on a facility tour of the centre. Some of the equipment at the centre include automated charpy unit, manual charpy unit, tensile tester, bend test machine, post weld heat treatment unit, milling machine, fume extractors, bend saw and Lincoln welding machines. G.B. Wodi, traditional ruler of Elelenwo Etor, the host community, was delighted to witness the setting up of such a viable venture in his domain. He was particularly happy that since the ITL has a rapport with the community in terms of its commitment towards its corporate social responsibility, CSR, many youths of Elelenwo Etor would have the opportunity of acquiring the skills needed for employment in oil companies. Chris Peters, global training and examination services manager, TWI, who came from the United Kingdom to witness the epoch making event, told Newswatch that he was impressed with the facilities in the centre. “The facilities in the centre are world class and it will give the oil and gas industry in Nigeria access to certify people to international standards,” Peters told Newswatch. He explained that TWI decided to partner with ITL in this venture because over the years, Onyechi, its chief executive, has demonstrated uncommon commitment to integrity and precision engineering. ITL was established about 11 years ago as a certified technical training, non-destructive test, NDT, and projects management company, providing services for multinational oil companies. It ranks among the top three indigenous NDT companies in Nigeria.