

**LEAD DEBATE ON THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS ACT
CAP N84 LFN 2004 (AMENDMENT) BLL 2017.**

SENATOR STELLA ODUAH.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on this very important Bill which seeks to amend the NYSC Act to make provisions for compulsory acquisition of vocational skills by Corps Members.

The bill was read for the first time in this Chamber on the 24th November 2015.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, research has shown that Nigerian youths over the years has resorted to acquiring certificates after their first degree out of frustration and desperation and yet confused about what to do after NYSC because they failed to acquire vocational skill during the one year service period. The dwindling job opportunities in the country has necessitated the call for the passage of this NYSC amendment Bill into law to address these challenges by educating and training the Corps Members on skills acquisition and entrepreneurial ventures.

The major goal of this Bill when passed is to equip Corps Members with entrepreneurial skills to enable them build sustainable and profitable businesses after their National Youth Service year. The benefit of the programme, includes securing the future of Corps Members through the acquisition of relevant skills towards business success, learning in a conducive environment with state of the art teaching materials, maximizing your service year and setting the stage for a fulfilling future, providing access to several funding windows towards starting or improving your business, generating substantial resources through harnessing your potentials, learning to develop a winning, investor-ready business plan among others.

This Bill Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, seeks to introduce the idea of compulsory vocational skill acquisition by Corp members to develop them in some skills to become employers of labour after their service year.

The period of NYSC is to prepare our youths to rediscover their passions, talents and skills and not to dwell on their certificates as present day Nigeria certificate does not put food on one's table, rather it is the skills and talents that do.

The amendment which this Bill is seeking is an insertion of a new section 5 to provide for a compulsory Vocational Training for Corps Members in the skills domain as outlined in the schedule to the Bill. The Bill further splits the service year into two:-

First, to be directed towards gaining experience in the work environment; while

Second part will be geared towards free and compulsory acquisition of vocational skills.

The NYSC in accordance with the provision of the Bill will collaborate with the National Directorate for Employment and other relevant accredited and registered vocational centers and artisans workshops for Vocational Training of Corps Members.

The objective of this Bill is to reduce unemployment among our teeming graduates after their service year as they become self-employed and by implication even be employers of labour.

The enactment of this Bill into law will equip our graduates with practical skills during the service year and this will go a long way in reducing the number of graduates seeking for few or non-available Civil Service jobs.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, the trust of this Bill is to integrate entrepreneurship skill acquisition into the programmes of the NYSC to provide job creations, poverty alleviation, reduction in unemployment rate, developing of youth enterprises and technological development thereby leading to the recognition of Nigerian certificates nationally and internationally.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, we have to transform the NYSC into an NYSC of national service and national development which was the original idea behind the scheme; beyond national integration, it should also be a platform for national development. It will be worthy of commendation if young people in the service of their father land for one year, get in return from their country necessary skills that will better their life in the future.

It is my firm believe that this Bill will develop and place our teeming youths in the right-direction after service and hence make them useful tool for the transformation of our national economy.

I therefore urge you all to support this Bill for Second Reading.

Thank you.