

# 17 Years of Excellence in Africa

## - Bernhard Vester bows out

NO. 15 | JUNE 2020 | VOL.2



*Bernard Vester bows out of AFOS Foundation after 17 years of passionate leadership and dedicated delivery of the foundation's development initiatives in Africa. We celebrate his excellence.*

Since 2003, AFOS Foundation have demonstrated dedicated support to Micro, Medium and Small businesses in Nigeria using a multi-stakeholder approach that involves partnership with the microfinance industry, reputable agric companies and small-holder farmers. AFOS stands for self-help entrepreneurship, and partnerships

on an equal footing. Using this model and led by Bernhard Vester, our foremost representative in Africa, the foundation created the big network with best-in-class partners including CEOs and top management of regulators, associations, partner companies, development agencies as well as consulting, training and other top service providing businesses.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This special issue of our monthly news story has been dedicated to Bernhard Vester, the pioneer representative of AFOS Foundation in Nigeria and Africa, who initiated and brought success to most of the foundation's projects in Nigeria.

At almost 65 years of age, Bernhard decides to venture into new professional challenges in his career.

**Special  
Edition**

Bernard Vester was a founding member of AFOS Foundation in 2003 and for 17 years supported the growth of the foundation in different roles such as a member of the Board of Directors, member of the Board of Trustees, he acted twice as Short Term Expert in the Philippines and finally as Head of the African region. He has been at the forefront of every of AFOS development projects in Nigeria, having made several trips to Nigeria since 2003. During these trips, Bernard was driving the foundation's development goals for Nigeria which is to promote entrepreneurial initiatives to enable wealth creation in both urban and rural areas.

Because microfinance and agriculture is a proven tool to promote entrepreneurial growth and to support the rising middle class in developing countries, we believe that these goals can be achieved with enhanced microfinance and good agricultural practice. Our approach back then and now has been to guide our partners through change management, organizational development and talent management processes focusing on their middle management (talent pool + graduate trainees).



*The AFOS Nigeria and Germany team.*  
**L-R:** Ladi Akoni, Adetutu Ogunnaike, Peter Von Pokrzywnicki, Ana Puyalto, Leo Kreuz, Nissi Lyam and Bernhard Vester



*Bernard at a workshop with the AFOS Nigeria team.*  
**L-R:** Ladi Akoni, Samson Ogunjemila, Nissi Lyam, Taiwo Oni, Bernhard Vester and Lilian Sahabor-Bassey

Bernard has worked with different Institutions in Nigeria such as LAPO, Umuchinemere MFB, DEC Bauchi, Grooming, and CDF to enhance their strategy, organizational development and HR. In collaboration with LAPO, he designed the BMZ funded Microfinance project in 2011 with approval in 2012. This programme has over time provided best learning intervention programs that address the identified gaps within the microfinance sub-sector.



*In February 2020, Bernhard led a delegation of 20 institutional members of the Nigerian Microfinance Platform on an exposure tour of Europe to facilitate cross-border partnerships*

The project which had 2 phases (MF I & MF+II) benefited various microfinance banks and microfinance institutions such as Advans La Fayette MFB, HASAL MFB, LAPO, Accion MFB, Fortis MFB etc.

As Head of AFOS Africa, he was one of the initiators of the Nigerian Microfinance Platform (NMP) which with time had developed to be the common platform for the entire MF-industry representing over 18,000 staff (delivering sustainable income for their families) and over 12 million clients across the country to take positive influence on the lives of maybe 60 million Nigerians (including family factor) on the bottom of the pyramid. He also drove the establishment of the Microfinance Learning and Development Centre (MLDC), which now plays a major role in the sustainability of all of AFOS project activities and with the target to make it the number one training institute in Anglophone West Africa, ensuring best-in-class quality at affordable prices and most especially to champion sustainability, self-regulation, efficiency and social impacts assessment initiatives.

Together with our partner TGI, Bernhard helped to design the AFOS AGR project which was approved in 2017 under which AFOS Foundation has partnered with 5 Agric companies as the initial transformation partners in Nigeria (CHI Farms, FoodPro, TUNS Farms, and recently Big Dutchman and Daytee Farms) to provide development trainings for their senior management and middle management staff as well as Quality Technician training series for their technicians. The Agric project also included a programmed training of 30,000 Small-holder farmers on Good Agricultural Practices, Financial Literacy and Access to Cooperatives and Markets in addition to ToT programme for farmers with outstanding performance with linkage programme that make entrepreneurs out of these farmers.

With impressive networking abilities, he linked together with strong best-practice partners of Microfinance and AGR industry to create a big network across the two sectors, and with the support of our partner TGI to prepare for the creation of a physical training center in Ibadan for AGR and MF-industry.



During the past 23 years, Mr. Vester has functioned as a management consultant for strategy, value-based organizational development and HR, as well as change implementation management paired with management coaching. His consulting focus has been on the global chemical industry and larger family businesses. He was a board member of AFOS Foundation and different institutions and companies like the German Catholic Entrepreneurs Organization (BKU), the key promoter of AFOS Foundation, LAPO Training Institute and Josera company.

Bernhard started his professional career with BMW Corporation where he spent 11 years working in various roles, most notably as guiding the corporate Kaizen change management process. Then he worked for the Japanese computer & communications corporation NEC and thereafter worked for a high-end fashion company in Germany and Italy.

Mr. Vester takes great interest in developing young professionals by making best use of their managerial, soft-skill and entrepreneurial talents coupled with value-based coaching, to better serve the society. In his words *"Yes, I believe it was my greatest achievement in Nigeria to have formed such a power team. I am proud of each one in the AFOS team with their individual competencies, talents and dedication to the common development goals"*



Bernhard has been a source of inspiration to us at AFOS INGO Nigeria, his dedication to continuous development, his initiatives, courage in the face of challenges, and peoples' management skills has led the team this far. We do miss him and are determined to keep pushing as a team to achieve our common development goals for Nigeria.

His passion for Africa continues, however, now moving from West to East Africa. We do hope Bernhard would one day climb up the Mount Kilimanjaro – *his dearest dream.*