

POSITIONING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR WORK AND ENTERPRISE ACROSS AN EMERGING VALUE CHAIN:

ICT IN ABIA STATE

Niger Delta Youth Employment Pathways (NDYEP)
June 2019



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Tochukwu Clinton Chukwueke



Summary

Niger Delta Youth Employment Pathways (NDYEP) began in 2018 to develop models of youth training in which marginalised young people are trained in market-relevant skills and subsequently supported into sustainable jobs or enterprise. It currently works through 13 implementing partners in the aquaculture, construction and ICT sectors, in Rivers, Abia and Akwa Ibom states. This paper explores the methods applied and the mid-term results achieved in the ICT sector in Abia state, using the example of the project implemented by Clintonel Innovation Centre (CIC).

Aba, Abia State's commercial hub, has a plethora of Small and Medium Enterprises, SMEs manufacturing products that are sold in different parts of Nigeria. Most of these products are produced manually thus making the products uncompetitive with competitors who have high-tech and automated production lines. This challenge provides an opportunity for young people who are interested in ICT in Aba and will lead to improvement in quality of 'Aba Made' products.

NDYEP's intervention in ICT aimed to equip youth with skills such as coding and digital marketing that would help them obtain jobs in the ICT sector. CIC has trained 140 youth; 28% of whom are women. All the trainees were all young people, aged 17-28, mostly from low income families, with diverse educational backgrounds- some were secondary school drop outs, some had completed secondary school; some were under-graduates and some graduates. A few were artisans trying to run small businesses. Almost half of the trainees (49%) participated in a training on "Business Development and Access to Funding for Start-ups". 69 of the trainees are either self-employed freelancers or in paid employment, 34 of them are in internships while 29 trainees started 10 businesses. In summary, about 90% of the trainees are engaged; 77% of them are either self-employed freelancers or in salaried employment; 24% of the total trained have been placed in internships.

Key features of the implementation model supporting these results are:

- **Combining business and development sector approaches:** NDYEP partnered with entrepreneurial business-oriented organisations that were selected through a competitive tender process. Through these organisations, it has deployed profit-oriented strategies with the objective of contributing to stimulating economic growth and demonstrating 'business thinking' to trainees. For the ICT sector in Aba, Abia State, NYDEP partnered with Innovation Growth Hub and Clintonel Innovation Centre (CIC), a solar-powered STEM Centre, that provides training, mentoring and equipment for young people to create different products and businesses.
- **Working to strengths:** PIND project management permitted flexibility concerning training content, approach, and the relationships built by grantees to support training. It aimed to offer tailored support to organisations as their approaches evolved. This support allowed the organisations to work to their strengths and evolve training-to-enterprise/employment models tailored to the particular local economy in which their organisation is embedded. For CIC, this allowed the development of a distinct approach involving an enriched, hands-on training curriculum which includes opportunity to identify gaps and problems and develop resourcefulness to solve these and forge relationships with entrepreneurs for future opportunities for the trainees after completion.
- **Enriching training with an integrated approach:** The training provided by CIC in ICT/Solar combines five syllabi: 1) Computer Aided Design (CAD); 2) Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM); 3) Renewable Energy (Solar); 4) Access to funding for start-ups; and 5) Soft skills or business and personal development. CIC adapted the Autodesk Inc. curriculum for the training on Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM), using Autodesk Inventor and Autodesk Fusion360 respectively. The curriculum of Intelligent Energy-Europe (IEE), a programme of the European Commission, was used for solar energy. The ICT training was practice-oriented; it provided trainees with hands-on experience as part of the training. The trainees were exposed to functioning business processes, as an added dimension of their training. CIC built a market research component (Market Immersion) into the training.
- **Partnering with community embedded organisations:** CIC built strategic partnerships for the project and created wider networks and more opportunities for the trainees through collaboration with YES Building Initiative and E.T. Edwin Industrial Company among others. These include a potential partnership with Leather Products Manufacturers Association of Abia State (LEPMAS) to have a Skill Up Abia design office in its secretariat providing CAD/CAM services to leather products manufacturers in Abia State. There is yet another opportunity to partner with Shoe Sole Dealers of Abia State to provide CAD/CAM services. CIC also partnered with several other organisations as potential employers of the

trainees and to secure internship placements for them. The organisations include Solid Blast Technical Services, MaacZulus Innovative Skills, Cele Ife Hill Company, Candis Company Limited, Common Facility Centre (CFC), and PGN Company.

- **Creating accountability to the onward pathway:** one of the unique features of the NDYEP is the establishment of accountability for the outcomes of training – in terms of employability of trainees – at the level of the training organisation, with support from the broader project. CIC therefore worked on creating three types of post-training onward pathways from the outset: creating start-up companies; routes to employment and self-employed freelancing; and internship opportunities. Since the training, 34 trainees have been placed on internships; 69 trainees became self-employed freelancers or secured waged jobs; and 29 started 10 companies. CIC provided post training support to trainees on internships by monitoring their performance and supporting them to transit from internship to full employment, routinely met with trainees and freelancers to discuss work and life challenges and proffer solutions.
- **Completion rate:** Completion rate in the first batch of training was 46% but it increased to 92% in the second batch. To achieve this increase, CIC consulted widely with other training service providers. One of the institutions consulted revealed that they involve the parents of trainees in their programs. As a result, CIC invited parents/guarantors of shortlisted applicants to sign an agreement indicating that they will refund the cost of training if their child/ward drops out.

NDYEP promotes an inclusive approach for the programme, and had set a target that at least 40% of trainees benefitting from the programme should be a combination of women and people with disabilities. It also targeted marginalised young people in the age group 16-26 from the outset. These criteria for trainee selection presented a number of challenges to CIC and other partner organisations. CIC achieved the 40% target for CAD, in which 51% of the trainees were females, for CAM and Solar the female trainees were 34% and 9% respectively. To overcome this challenge, while recruiting for the second batch of training, CIC created separate adverts asking for only female trainees in order to get more applications from females. It also tried to reduce the technical grade for women. This led to a higher response rate from women, but there were no applications from any person with disabilities.

Emerging recommendations for organisations moving into similar youth work readiness approaches include:

- Ensuring accountability of the project to employment / sustainable business outcomes, not simply training, and planning for the post-training activities and support that will be necessary to facilitate the onward process of strengthening skills, building experience and accessing finance.
- Initiate strong, transparent partner and trainee selection processes which identify partners embedded as businesses in the sector; and select trainees according to clearly understood criteria.
- Design a curriculum which integrates business and soft skills with technical skills, and use a methodology which give opportunity to apply and practice all these types of skills over the course of the training.
- Use strategies for inclusion of people with disabilities for contributing to gender equality, especially in sectors in which women do not normally work.

NIGER DELTA YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

The NDYEP is a two-year collaboration between Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) and Ford Foundation which aims to contribute to addressing the critical issue of youth unemployment in the Niger Delta. In its first year, the pilot program has focused on three priority states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, and Rivers.

The overall goal of project is to develop models of youth job readiness that provide marginalized young men and women in the Niger Delta the opportunity to secure sustainable jobs through training that prepares them with market relevant skills.

To achieve this, the project articulated four strategic change objectives expressing the implementation logic of the project, to:

1. Develop an understanding of the employment and skills landscape in the Niger Delta region to inform strategic investments in skills development programming;
2. Promote a demand-driven approach to skills development in the Niger Delta through partnerships between youth employment ecosystem players, especially employers, policymakers, development partners and training institutions;
3. Develop programs that demonstrate model pathways from skills training to employment through the provision of direct vocational training in three sectors of the economy, ICT, agriculture and construction, and other sectors where opportunities are identified; and
4. Monitor and evaluate the project and document, and disseminate key learnings.

NDYEP in its first year has worked through 13 implementing partners across the three priority states. These partners have been tasked with training and supporting young people into enterprise and employment in the three sectors of aquaculture, ICT and construction.

THE ICT SECTOR

Abia State's economy is diversified with a substantial leather and garment products manufacturing sector largely comprised of SMEs. The state capital, Umuahia, is mainly populated by highly ingenious and industrious people, manufacturing products that are sold in different parts of Nigeria. Most of these products are produced manually by machinists who lack access to technology. Manual processes usually result in inaccuracies, poor finishing, limited production volumes, and higher cost of production. This makes Aba products uncompetitive with competitors who have high-tech and automated production lines.

There is a growing interest in the ICT sector in Abia state, reflected in the growth of hubs, co-working spaces, fabrication and innovation centres such as the Innovation Growth Hub, Lean Factory, and the Clintonel Innovation Centre to create and meet market demand. The general public is becoming increasingly more aware of opportunities in technology through radio programs

such as "tech on radio," which discuss how, why and where technology is important beyond social media. The "computer village" in Aba, a large market for technology sales and maintenance services, is a hub of activity in the ICT sector, filling a critical role in the local tech ecosystem.¹

Increasing dependence on ICT is driving demand for service in the sector: internet services, graphic design, digital marketing, web development, computer maintenance and repairs including hardware and software maintenance. These demands provide employment opportunities for young people who are interested in ICT in Aba and will lead to improvement in quality of 'Aba Made' products.

¹ Identifying Pathways to Employment for Youth in the Niger Delta. An Analysis of Abia, Akwa Ibom and Rivers States

such as “tech on radio,” which discuss how, why and where technology is important beyond social media. The “computer village” in Aba, a large market for technology sales and maintenance services, is a hub of activity in the ICT sector, filling a critical role in the local tech ecosystem.¹

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CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

This Practice Paper presents a case study of the approach and methods used in the ICT sector for youth employment readiness by NDYEP. It uses the example of Clintonel Innovation Center (CIC), an implementing partner located in Aba, Abia state that implemented Skill up Abia ICT training. Between September 2018 and March 2019, CIC provided ICT-related training to 140 youth; 69 of whom were also trained in Entrepreneurship.

This paper is one of three case studies developed following the first year of programme implementation. The overall purpose of the three studies is to capture learning from the programme for wider dissemination supporting a broader understanding and uptake of the project’s approach. The studies set out to identify the factors and conditions of implementation that have supported promising results.

Qualitative methods were used to collect data for the studies from different perspectives. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were held with implementing partner staff, trainees, trainees who had graduated into internships, employment or incubated start-ups, employers, and potential employers. Observation methods were also used during visits to training venues and employment venues.

Data collected was analysed using social science key word coding methods, and triangulated against information collected from a document review and the programme’s results database. The methodology also drew on a data collection process for the programme’s Mid Term Evaluation (MTE), and field visits for these two processes were synergised. The field visit took place in all three states during March 2019.

HOW HAS THE NDYEP PROJECT BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ACTION IN ICT?

NDYEP’s intervention in ICT aimed to equip youth with skills such as coding and digital marketing that would help them obtain jobs in the ICT sector. Like NDYEP’s interventions in the other sectors, its approach builds on the recognition that most traditional skills acquisition programmes have failed to deliver sustainable results because they do not pay enough attention to what happens, post-training, to the entrepreneurs that they produce.

NDYEP seeks to avoid this pitfall by developing a robust infrastructure for post-training support, assisting the young entrepreneurs to navigate the harsh conditions of the business world that can cause business failure. This support includes building post-training opportunities into the fabric of the programme and linking it with the improving technological processes of ICT and market linkages. Overall, it aims to equip youth with sufficient skills to make them employable and/or start their own enterprises.

Results at CIC after One Year

Between September 2018 and March 2019, CIC trained 140 youth; 25 (13 women and 12 men) in Computer Aided Design (CAD), 53 (21 women and 32 men) in Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) and 62 (5 women and 57 men) in renewable energy. CIC also provided training in “Business Development and Access to Funding for Start-ups” to 69 of the trainees.

¹ Identifying Pathways to Employment for Youth in the Niger Delta. An Analysis of Abia, Akwa Ibom and Rivers States

After the training, 69 trainees became self-employed freelancers or secured waged jobs, 34 trainees were placed on internships and 29 trainees started 10 companies. In other words, not less than 90% of the trainees are engaged; more than three quarters (77%) of which are either self-employed or in paid employment, while about one quarter (24%) have been placed in internships.

Abia is known as the “SME capital of Nigeria” due to the large presence of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, it has the highest unemployment rate (31.6%) in the South-East geo-political zone.² This is of particular concern, since more than half of Nigerians are under the age of 30, youth unemployment (between ages 15 and 24) is also very high at 36.6% in 2017.

The ICT industry in Aba is growing and it is mostly software focused. Increasing dependence on ICT is driving demand for service in the sector. This demand provides employment opportunities for young people in Aba. Some tasks in the sector have low entry requirements for young people, in terms of formal education, thus there are few barriers to learn and grow in the industry. The renewable energy industry in Aba is also growing, driven by the need to diversify sources of energy in order to have stable energy in a context of generally unstable and unreliable power supply.

CIC trainees were all young people, mostly from low income families, between the ages of 17 and 28 with diverse educational backgrounds- some were secondary school drop outs, some had completed secondary school; some were under-graduates and some graduates. A few were artisans trying to run small businesses; most of them were fully or partly financially dependent on their parents or other relatives.

Some of the start-up enterprises formed following the training have started earning income: UVIK builds solar charging stations and rents power banks to subscribers; Fli-Tech has built its first prototype and is building an improved version; LED-TECH builds practical science kits which make science subjects simple, fun and easy to learn and has completed practical kits for Optics in Physics.

The training has transformed the reality of some trainees *“It helped me find relevance as I have lived in Aba. I didn’t see that huge gap in Aba and this training has opened my eyes to see opportunities”*. *“It broadened my thinking and innovation and the three months (spent on the training) have covered the years I spent in the university”*.

KEY FEATURES OF IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH THE NDYEP-CIC PARTNERSHIP

1. COMBINING BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT SECTOR APPROACHES

A defining feature of NYDEP is that it has partnered, through a competitive tender process, mainly with entrepreneurial, business-oriented organisations. Through these organisations, it has deployed profit-oriented strategies with the objective of contributing to stimulating economic growth in selected sectors, and (indirectly perhaps) to demonstrate ‘business thinking’ to trainees. For the ICT sector in Aba, Abia State, NYDEP partnered with Innovation Growth Hub and Clintonel Innovation Centre (CIC). This paper focuses on the activities of CIC, a solar-powered STEM Centre, that provides training, mentoring and equipment for young people to create different products and businesses.

The story of Tochukwu Clinton Chukwueke

Tochukwu Clinton Chukwueke, is the founder of Clintonel Innovation Centre (CIC) - Nigeria’s first Makerspace - a solar-powered hardware-based hub for capacity building, engineering innovation, indigenous product development and manufacturing. Tochukwu, a graduate of Electronic Engineering, is an inventor with three Patents, and has been recognised by several national and

² Labour Force Statistics - Volume 2: Unemployment and Underemployment by State Q3 2018, National Bureau of Statistics, April 2019.

international organizations including Ford Foundation (USA), Ministry of Trade and Investment (Nigeria), Re:3D (USA), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), etc.

CIC's office is located in Aba and its personnel comprises two instructors; four staff who are responsible for marketing, administration and finance; three interns; and the founder. CIC provides training, mentoring and equipment for young Nigerians to create engineering innovations, build indigenous products and start up new businesses.

Tochukwu's foray into innovation and setting up the centre was a result of the frustrations that he confronted as an inventor at a much younger age. In his early days, he traversed the length and breadth of Nigeria in search of a facility to build prototypes for his designs but he found none. He, therefore, made a commitment to build a centre of innovation where Nigerians will be trained, mentored and supported to invent and develop home-grown products. He hopes vision to transform Aba into the engineering and manufacturing capital of Africa.

2. WORKING TO STRENGTHS

Aside from specifying trainee profiles and establishing some conditions for quality training, PIND project management has been flexible concerning training content, approach, and the relationships built by grantees to support training. Rather, PIND has aimed to offer tailored support to organisations as their approaches have evolved. This has allowed the organisations to work to their strengths and evolve training-to-enterprise/employment models tailored to the particular local economy in which their organisation is embedded. For Clintonel Innovation Centre (CIC) in Abia, this has allowed the development of a distinct approach involving:

- An enriched, hands-on training curriculum which includes opportunity to identify gaps and problems and develop resourcefulness to solve these. For example, the training approach integrated practical opportunities for trainees to seize potential business opportunities in Abia by identifying gaps in the market systems and developing solutions to close the gaps. CIC in implementing the training realised the necessity of having a 3D printer to allow for practice, it created an alternative power source by installing solar in its office. The trainees thus had an opportunity to use the skills they have acquired.
- Building relationships with private sector entrepreneurs for onward opportunities for the trainees after completion. The training model integrates the skill requirements of the private sector into the curriculum in order to ensure that trainees have the requisite skills to be employed in the sector. Trainees were linked with local internship opportunities unlike in the past when they had to travel out of Abia to get employment.

3. ENRICHING TRAINING WITH AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

CIC has trained 140 young people in ICT/Solar in the first phase of the project. The training combines five syllabi: 1) Computer Aided Design (CAD); 2) Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM); 3) Renewable Energy (Solar); 4) Access to funding for start-ups; and 5) Soft skills or business and personal development.

CIC adapted the official curriculum of Autodesk Inc. for the training on Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM), using Autodesk Inventor and Autodesk Fusion360 respectively. The curriculum of Intelligent Energy-Europe (IEE), a programme of the European Commission, was used for Solar energy.

The ICT training was practice-oriented; it provided trainees with hands-on experience as part of the training. The trainees were exposed to functioning business processes, as an added dimension of their training. CIC built a market research component (Market Immersion) into the training. This aspect of the training required the trainees to identify gaps in the market system that they could fill based on their newly acquired skills. The trainees, in groups of twos and fours, spent two weeks interacting with schools, hospitals, metal fabricators, producers of leather goods, soaps, plastics, furniture makers and betting shops in Abia state, in order to identify their constraints and develop workable solutions. At the end of the two weeks, trainees started developing solutions to fill the identified gaps by building prototypes using the components, tools and equipment in CIC.

‘[The training has] upgraded my mindset as I used to look at building things in a local way but now I think outside of the box. I can see that there are opportunities everywhere to make money. The kind of people I talk to have changed as I now interact with people who think far because of the people I met at the training’.

Trainee at CIC, Abia

At the end of the market immersion, the trainees worked in teams to generate ideas and pitch to investors. After the competition, a total of 10 new companies were created by 29 graduating trainees. These 29 trainees attended business classes in order to improve their business plans and models. Afterwards, they presented their plans to business experts who criticised them constructively and gave them feedback. The trainees, using the feedback they received, then improved upon their business models and reported their progress to the whole class.

Tailoring Training to Local Context

CIC also took steps to adapt the training to local conditions. It made a slight modification to the curriculum of the Autodesk Inventor which was used for the CAD training, and in the course of the training, there was a further modification to allow focus on the relevance of the training to the local market. Thus, there was focus on the footwear industry in Aba. The trainees learnt how to model the human foot, using software to design shoes and soles. They have provided solutions for specific needs in the local market.

4. PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY EMBEDDED ORGANISATIONS TO SUPPORT ASPECTS OF THE TRAINING AND POST-TRAINING

CIC included access to funding in the training curriculum. It organized a Business Funding Workshop for trainees during which they were introduced to the numerous opportunities available to start ups including funding, fellowships, mentorship, trainings, partnerships, etc. this training was anchored by experts who had received national and international funding and other awards. 69 trainees attended the workshop.

Strategic partnerships are being developed for the project with institutions in Abia State. These include a potential partnership with Leather Products Manufacturers Association of Abia State (LEPMAS) to have a Skill Up Abia design office in its secretariat providing CAD/CAM services to leather products manufacturers in Abia State. There is yet another opportunity to partner with Shoe Sole Dealers of Abia State to provide CAD/CAM services.

CIC collaborated with other groups in order to implement training and post-training activities. Some of them include:

- YES Building Initiative - provided HR Consultancy and Support
- Wider Perspectives - provided Soft Skills/Management training
- E.T. Edwin Industrial Company - provided entrepreneurship training

Partnering with these organisations helped bring about wider networks and more opportunities for the trainees.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE ONWARD PATHWAY: CREATING THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR POST-TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

A key feature of the NYDEP approach which distinguishes it from other youth training initiatives, has been establishing accountability for the outcomes of training - in terms of employability of trainees - at the level of the training organisation, with support from the broader project. This has been achieved through focusing on outcomes of training from the outset, but also by writing targets for placements into grantee contracts, as well as by selecting partners who are motivated by the logic of the project.

CIC therefore has worked on creating three types of post-training onward pathways from the outset: creating start-up companies; routes to employment and self-employed freelancing; and internship opportunities. Since the training, 34 trainees have been placed on internships; 69 trainees became self-employed freelancers or secured waged jobs using knowledge from the entrepreneurial lessons during the training; and 29 started 10 companies.

START UPS

The start-ups include the following:

LED Technology

LED Tech creates unique proprietary kits for science education. Their kits provide easier, faster and deeper understanding of science subjects in primary and secondary schools. They improve academic performance as well as practical deep science knowledge requisite for excellence in science and technology careers. LED has already developed kits to cover most topics in Physics.

MAC Designs

MAC Designs provide design and mould making services to the footwear industry. They have been in discussions with the leaders of the Aba shoe producing clusters to provide CAD and CAM services to the industry. Before MAC Designs innovated in this area, the moulds used in shoe production were imported from China. The industry eagerly awaits the commencement of operations of MAC Designs. MAC has already created over 60 designs of different shoes, sandals and shoe soles.

FLI Tech

FLI Tech designs and builds timing, alarm and communication products for schools, churches and conferences. They are in the process of developing the first version of their line of products.

TUZAR

TURZAR is a product design start-up focusing on the plastic industry. They design products for plastic manufacturers including the moulds for mass producing such products. They have designed over 50 different plastic products in readiness for mass production.

Vs-Power

Vs-Power is a renewable energy company providing power bank rental services in addition to solar charging boots for customers to recharge their mobile phones and rechargeable lamp batteries.

Vs-Power is working to attract 100 subscribers that will each pay ₦2,400 per month. The target is to grow the subscriber base to 1,000 before the end of 2019.

After the training the trainees were grouped into teams for market immersion. They came up with several business. They attended business classes where they made pitches to a panel of business experts and investors. After the presentation, some pitches were chosen and put in a three-month incubation program.

Favour's story

Favour Chinwe Orih is a highly talented young woman who had just completed her OND and was searching for a further learning opportunity when she heard about Skill Up Abia through her friends. She applied and was admitted for Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) training.

Prior to the opportunity of the CAM training, she was looking to learn a skill in order not to be idle but she did not have the opportunity or means to realise her dream. She was keen to learn a skill but she was at home due to lack of opportunity.

The NDYEP training in CAM equipped her with the needed skills to explore her creativity and realise her dreams. At the end of her training, she, along with other trainees, started a start-up Fem Lasting Innovation (FLI) Tech. They pitched along with ten other start-ups and FLI-Tech took the second position. FLI Tech designs and builds timing, alarm and communication products for schools, churches, hospitals and conferences. They have built their first prototype, a device for effective teaching in schools, and are in the process of building an improved version. FLI Tech is also developing a second product, a life-saving technology system for hospitals.

Although her start-up has not started making profits, Favour is positive and hopeful about the outcomes of the incubation stage, which lasts for 3 months. The start-up is currently one and a half months through the incubation period. After incubation, Favour and her partners will pitch their start-up to investors. After that, they will begin expansion. They are hopeful to get 10 schools to buy into their idea. If they successfully achieve that, then the next stage is the investment stage.

During the training period, Favour developed different business ideas some of which are PCT- Programming Communication Timing, an electronic board, vegetable cutter, etc. Though her start-up is undergoing business incubation, she has already started thinking of next steps; in her own words *'I have started getting ideas on how to hit the market. It is an interesting period and there have been so much to learn. I am hopeful that I would be fully prepared to run my business when I am done with the incubation. I am also learning programming in addition to the learnings from the training and incubation.'*

Since completing the training, Favour testifies that her exposure to and knowledge of modern technology has increased and her confidence is boosted as well. *'I can convince someone, and I have started making money. I now see and calculate big figures and I know that very soon, I will turn them into realities.'*

SELF-EMPLOYED FREELANCERS

34 trainees have secured internship placements in different organisations. Some of the intern trainees will be employed at the end of the internship period. 69 trainees are working as self-employed freelancers. CAD and CAM trainees' source for jobs online through freelancing sites including: Fiverr, Upwork, Freelancer.com, Envato Studio, PeoplePerHour, etc. At these freelancing websites, the trainees bid for jobs and earn a living for themselves. Some meet clients and offer design services for a fee while Solar energy trainees find private clients for solar installation and maintenance jobs.

CIC provided post training support to trainees on internships by monitoring their performance and supporting them to transit from internship to full employment. CIC routinely met with trainees and freelancers to discuss work and life challenges and proffer solutions. The company also paid trainees on internships monthly stipends.

INTERNSHIPS

In line with the project model, CIC has partnered with several other organisations as potential employers of the trainees post-training and to secure internship placements for them. The organisations include:

- Solid Blast Technical Services - provided internship positions for trainees.
- MaacZulus Innovative Skills - provided internship positions for trainees.
- Cele lfe Hill Company - provided internship positions for trainees.
- Candis Company Limited - provided internship positions for trainees.
- Common Facility Centre (CFC) - provided internship positions for trainees.
- PGN Company - provided internship positions for trainees.

34 trainees have secured internship placements in different organisations. Some of the intern trainees will be employed at the end of the internship period.

Kalu's story

Kalu Prosper is one of the trainees who completed his training at Skill Up Abia and is currently working as a technical intern for CIC. When asked how he was selected for the internship, Kalu believes it was because he thoroughly understood the instructors during the training and had previous knowledge of some software. He had also acquired some level of technical skills; however, he was new to the aspect of Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM). The trainees did some projects and Kalu was able to produce prototype using CAM. He believes he was chosen as a result of this, as not every trainee was able to produce a prototype.

Kalu had started his internship in the first week of March. CIC pays its interns some stipend; ₦7000 for allowance and ₦1200 for monthly data subscription. Kalu has been given a programme (guide) which will be followed during the internship. He recently started designing and producing moulds. He looks for items that can be mass produced and creates moulds prototype for the items. Kalu has successfully produced mould prototypes for hangers, plastic bottle containers and shoe soles.

During the CAM training classes, Kalu says they were not taught how to go about mass production but were simply taught how to design products. But during the internship, he has been exposed to more practical experiences. Now, he can confidently produce moulds of any items.

The internship position he holds with CIC lasts for 3 months. He is grateful for the free training and has been able to apply the lessons from the training during his internship. He recalls that he uses the same process that he was taught during the training: from problem identification, to design and to prototyping before beginning the manufacturing process. He says that all of the knowledge he gained during the CAM training is very important.

However, Kalu is unsure about finding a job after internship because of the unemployment rate in Nigeria. Nonetheless, he is staying positive as the idea of the programme is to drive people to be self-employed and create jobs.

Links to new opportunities and access to funding

To ensure funding does not inhibit the progress of the start-ups, CIC organized a Business Funding Workshop for them on 16th and 17th January. The participants were exposed to the numerous opportunities available to start-ups including funding, fellowships, mentorship, training, partnerships, etc. the workshop was facilitated by external experts, people who have successfully received national and international funding and other awards.

The first day of the workshop was specifically focused on the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Grant (\$10,000) Application process. Each participant presented their business idea and was guided to successfully apply for the grant. 69 entrepreneurial trainees attended the workshop.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

REACHING NDYEP'S TARGETED PROFILE OF TRAINEES

NDYEP's mission was to address youth unemployment and the age range for 'youth' was specified for the project at 16-26. At the same time, the project sought to identify young people who could move away from an endemic 'entitlement' culture in the region, created by an oil-based political economy that had for years attempted to address unrest created by the high levels of inequality written into its economic process through a 'handout' culture which young people had grown up with. NDYEP sought young people who could be inspired by opportunity, who were motivated and could be self-driven; who were capable of the graft that it takes to succeed in the market-driven framework of the private sector.

PIND also promotes an inclusive approach in all its work, and had set a target for NDYEP that at least 40% of trainees benefitting from the programme should be a combination of women and people with disabilities.

INCLUSION TARGET

CIC met with some challenges in meeting the gender target of the programme. While the 40% target was achieved for CAD, in which 51% of the trainees were females, for CAM and Solar the female trainees were 34% and 9% respectively.

To overcome this challenge, in recruiting candidates for the second batch of training, it created separate adverts asking for only female trainees in order to get more applications from females. It also tried to reduce the technical grade for women. This led to a higher response rate from women, but there were no applications from any person with disabilities.

There is room for more learning across the three sectors in the programme on how people living with disabilities can be accommodated. On its part, CIC hopes to relocate to a ground floor building where it would be easier for people with physical disabilities to access their facility/services.

COMPLETION RATE

There was also a challenge with completion rate in the first batch of training. In batch A completion rate was 46% while in batch B completion rate increased to 92%. To achieve this increase, CIC consulted widely with other training service providers. One of the institutions consulted revealed that they involve the parents of trainees in their programs. As a result, CIC invited parents/guarantors of shortlisted applicants to sign an agreement indicating that they will refund the cost of training if their child/ward drops out.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

One of the challenges confronting CIC in the implementation of the training is access to technology, including high cost of data for the cloud-based software that they use for the training.

A number of trainees procured laptops in order to practice at home. Most of them, however, bought old fairly used laptops which usually have lower specifications than the requirements of the software used in training. On acquiring these laptops, they took them to CIC for software installations. Thus, compelling CIC to repair and even upgrade the laptops. This led to unbudgeted expenditure on the program and deployment of staff for repairs and upgrade that were neither envisaged nor planned for. To address this issue, CIC engaged an IT expert to help with software installations, repairs of laptops, upgrading and system maintenance.

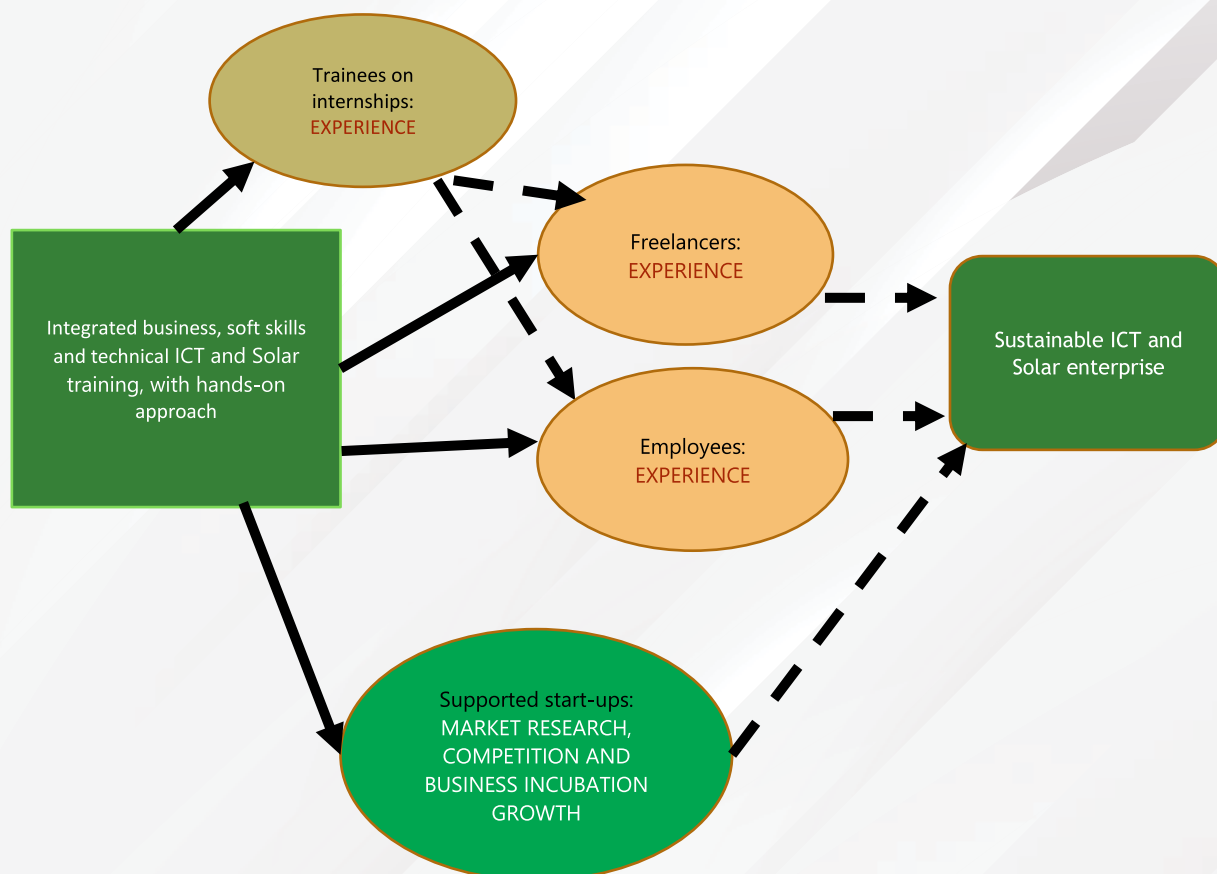
WHAT EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE PATHWAYS ARE BEING ESTABLISHED?

NDYEP set out to make sustainable livelihood options - either in employment or in enterprise - a real result of youth training in the three targeted sectors. It theorized that for the ICT sector, the central pathway to this would be via training organisations who were specifically tasked with supporting the transition from training into enterprise.

What has emerged is somewhat more complex and highlights the roles of two dimensions of a transition between training and enterprise which form parts of this 'pathway':

- Accumulating experience beyond the training
- Provision of technical support and mentoring to start-ups

Figure 1 illustrates the pathways to sustainable youth enterprise in ICT and Renewable Energy observable in CIC's process.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION IN MARKET RELATED YOUTH TRAINING IN THE ICT SECTOR

NDYEP's experience suggests the following broad lessons for creating successful approaches

1. Approach

Ensure that the goal of the initiative is clearly focused on employment and/or business competence outcomes, not simply training. This means at the design stage including components for post-training support to trainees into sustainable employment / business. These components should include opportunities to 1) strengthen skills and build experience in the sector and 2) access funds for business start-up / basic tools; either through employment allowing for saving, or through finance linkages. Roles to implement these components might include:

- mentor roles;
- advisory / incubation services for start-ups;
- market and input supply linkages;
- facilitation of access to finance beyond the training period.

2. Partner and trainee selection

Aim to work with organisations embedded in the sector as commercial actors / entrepreneurs, and engage them in a transparent, competitive selection process. Wherever possible, aim to work to the strengths of selected organisations, drawing on existing relationships, specialisations, and opportunities. In turn, engaged organisations should invest early in building relationships with other stakeholders in the sector who have an interest in seeing the field strengthened, especially in terms of skilled labour. Similarly, trainees must be selected in an open and transparent process on the basis of clear criteria.

3. Curriculum

The training curriculum should be integrated in two dimensions:

- 1) Integrating **soft skills** and **business skills** into a strong technical skills training for the sector.
 - The ‘business thinking’ part of business skills training should be an early module, and used to orientate young people from the outset.
 - Soft skills should be relevant and adapted to the context, for example including peacebuilding approaches in the Niger Delta.
- 2) Integrating a strong hands-on approach and practical elements for the technical skills and the soft skills, enabling students to apply their learning in practice at each step. This means creating ‘making’ and ‘doing’ opportunities as integral to the curriculum delivery, and delivering the technical curriculum using methodologies that allow practice of soft skills: e.g. including group projects to practice team work and presentation; classroom competition and peer evaluation etc.

4. Inclusion

Set out to achieve an inclusive process which supports people with disabilities and contributes to gender equality. To do this:

- Conduct focused outreach prior to trainee selection: liaise with specialist organisations who understand the needs of and have links to people with disabilities;
- Design women-specific advertising for work sectors which do not normally include women;
- Consider showcasing women trainees in non-traditional sectors from the early batches to act as role models and mentors for subsequent batches of women entering the sector.

5. For ICT interventions specifically:

- Develop a training curriculum that is relevant to the local context, provides hands-on experience for trainees and prepares / orients them to take advantage of potential business opportunities within the local tech eco-system.
- Build support systems into the training through a network of businesses that could employ trainees, provide internship opportunities and support transition from training into enterprises.

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