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YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA

YISHDA beneficiaries. Photo credit: YISHDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth Initiative for Sustainable Human Development in Africa (YISHDA) is a nonprofit organization that provides leadership training for youth in Nigeria. They provide training in the areas of education, information and communications technology (ICT) development, civic engagement, and business development, including employment training in building a résumé and cultivating soft skills. These programs bring youth and women to area libraries, with mutually beneficial impacts for libraries and users. YISDHA is developing a network of libraries in Nigeria equipped with ICTs and resources. The project is partnered with Beyond Access, the Universal Services Provision Fund (USPF), and the National IT Development Agency (NITDA).

Keywords: digital literacy, employability, entrepreneurship skills, women, youth, libraries, Africa, Nigeria

CONTEXT

By 2014, the Nigerian economy had become the largest in Africa; yet, poverty and unemployment remain high – particularly for women and youth. Nigeria has nearly 11 million unemployed youth, and women account for approximately 55 percent of that group. And less than half of the population has access to the Internet and the economic, social, and educational benefits it provides. While government agencies are already making investments in public access technology and nongovernmental organizations are working on workforce development programs, often these initiatives are not well connected.

Nigeria			
Population (UN, 2015)	183,523,432	**Fixed broadband subscriptions (%) (ITU, 2016)**	0.01
Population density (people per sq. km) (UN, 2015)	198.67	**Mobile cellular subscriptions (%) (ITU, 2016)**	81.82
Median household income (Gallup, 2006-2012)	US$ 2,667	**Individuals using the Internet (%) (ITU, 2016)**	25.7
Education (Mean years of schooling) (UNDP, 2013)	Male: 6.3 Female: 4.2	**Individuals using the Internet by gender (%) (ITU, 2016)**	N/A

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Youth Initiative for Sustainable Human Development in Africa is working to build a network of libraries across Nigeria that can serve as a durable platform for ongoing training and services aimed at developing the digital, employability, and entrepreneurship skills of women and youth in the country. The project is creating a network of libraries throughout Nigeria that are equipped to support women and youth who want to enhance their digital, employability, and entrepreneurship skills.

The project partners with the United States-based nonprofit organization Beyond Access, the Universal Services Provision Fund, and the National IT Development Agency to ensure that the libraries have the adequate technology and Internet connectivity needed to serve as training locations for young Nigerians between the ages of 8 and 30 looking for opportunities to gain the skills they need to enhance their economic opportunities.

YISHDA brings young people into the library to increase the libraries' use and also educate them. They work with 37 libraries in the north; there, 20 libraries participated in the Beyond Access program, and were equipped by the Universal Services Provision Fund (USPF) with facilities that include 50 computers and Internet access.

They provide training using the Intel Easy Step modules. The topics include computer basics, productivity software, and practical computer exercises. The librarians are trained in vision and techniques for implementing new library services, managing ICT equipment and services,

advocacy and partnership development, connecting users to economic opportunities at the library through developing skills, and accessing information.

YISHDA have developed a low-cost sustainability model. Phase one is free for participants, while phase two is free for libraries.

Project details			
Technology	Computer-based training	**Training**	Intel Easy Step Modules
Year program started	2015 (February) – 2017 (July)	**Cost to users**	Phase 1, free for participants Phase 2, free for libraries
Geography	North of Nigeria, FCT City Library, Wuse zone 4, Abuja; National Library of Nigeria, Area 2 Branch Abuja; National Library of Nigeria, Kaduna Branch	**Total cost of program**	Undisclosed
User profile	More than 300 youth, 18-30 years old; 46% of the trainees are women	**Associated organizations**	Beyond Access, INTEL, IREX, Zamfara State Library Board, ZamFarms

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

The global nonprofit organization IREX has been working with nine public libraries in Nigeria since May 2015. Since then, 210,000 people visited the libraries, 268 computers have become available to use, 62,500 visitors used a computer, and librarians trained 4,890 visitors. In total, 1,220 trainees have finished a multi-day course on ICT literacy and workforce development. Of those trainees, 46 percent of them were women, while 73 percent of them were under age 25. Additionally, 77 percent of them reported improved ICT skills. YISHDA followed up with the participants shortly after the program, and 19 of them had started businesses.

The impact for the libraries has also been substantial. The increased number of patrons from the project has enabled the continued operation and expansion of library services. Beyond Access has also trained more than 100 librarians from 72 libraries in every zone of Nigeria. In seven months, those librarians reported more than 300,000 visitors and over 16,000 participants in library programs.

CHALLENGES

Limited electricity access – Unreliable electricity is a challenge when technologies require a steady power supply to be functional.

Lack of Internet access – Even in cases where libraries have the necessary technology and nominally have an Internet connection, the connection and the signal strength are weak and/or unreliable.

Lack of sustained funding – Funding the project has been a challenge. The libraries that host the resources as well as the users all require support and training.

Insufficient data – Libraries without technology and Internet had difficulty to collect data in terms of the number of the participants and share that with stakeholders.

YISHDA'S SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

Mutually beneficial programing and engaging multiple stakeholders to advance common goals is helpful – The success of the project comes from providing a benefit to both the users and the libraries that host them for training. Using technology centers in libraries that are trying to secure more support helps everyone involved – both the trainees and the libraries themselves.

SOURCES

Agbara, M. (January 25, 2018). Personal interview.
Project website: www.yishda.org