

YOUTH SKILLS AND DIGITAL FUTURE PROJECT

Niger State, Nigeria



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project was a focused 6-month pilot initiative implemented by CREAP Africa Initiative in Niger State to strengthen young people's readiness for an increasingly digital and technology-driven economy. The project was designed in response to growing evidence that many youths, particularly those from low-income and underserved communities, lack the foundational digital competencies required to access employment, entrepreneurship, and remote work opportunities. Through structured training, practical learning sessions, and mentorship, the project equipped 45 young men and women with relevant, practical digital skills aligned with labor market demands.

Over the course of twenty-four weeks, participants received intensive instructions in computer literacy, internet navigation, online communication, and introductory digital entrepreneurship. The curriculum combined classroom-based learning with practical lab sessions, peer collaboration, and real-world assignments to ensure that participants did not only understand theory but could confidently apply their skills. By the end of the program, the majority of participants demonstrated measurable improvement in digital competence, confidence, and career orientation, with several already exploring income-generating opportunities online.

The pilot successfully demonstrated the feasibility and impact of community-based digital skills interventions in Niger State. With a completion rate of 93% and strong female participation, the project validated the demand for accessible, practical digital training among youth. The results provide clear evidence that targeted investment in digital capacity building can improve employability outcomes and economic resilience. The experience and lessons from this pilot now serve as the foundation for scaling and other initiative around youth skills building into a broader, future-focused program capable of reaching thousands more young people across Nigeria.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Nigeria is experiencing one of the fastest youth population growth rates in the world, with over 60% of its population under the age of 25. While this demographic structure presents a significant opportunity for economic growth, it also places immense pressure on the education systems, labor markets, and social infrastructure. Recent national data indicates that youth unemployment and underemployment remain persistent challenges, with many young people engaged in informal, low-income

activities that offer limited prospects for long-term stability. In Niger State, these challenges are amplified by limited access to quality technical training centers, inadequate digital infrastructure, and high levels of economic vulnerability among young people.

Although Nigeria has witnessed rapid growth in internet penetration and mobile connectivity over the past decade, access to meaningful digital skills remains uneven. Millions of young Nigerians use mobile phones primarily for social interaction but lack the foundational competencies required to leverage technology for productivity, employment, or entrepreneurship. Basic skills such as computer operation, digital document preparation, online research, and digital financial literacy are still inaccessible to many youths in semi-urban and rural communities. This digital divide continues to widen socio-economic gaps, leaving already marginalized youth further behind in an increasingly technology-driven economy.

Employers across sectors increasingly report a mismatch between available jobs and the skills possessed by young job seekers. Entry-level roles now require basic digital proficiency, familiarity with productivity software, and the ability to navigate online platforms. At the same time, emerging opportunities in digital skills and entrepreneurship remain largely untapped by youth in Niger State due to lack of exposure, mentorship, and structured training. The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project was therefore designed to directly address these systemic gaps by providing practical, hands-on digital training that enhances employability, builds confidence, and opens pathways to sustainable income generation.

3.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the project was to;

- Identify and train vulnerable, young people in foundational digital and computer skills.
- Upskill and improve participants' employability and digital confidence.
- Introduce youth to digital entrepreneurship and employable opportunities.
- Test a scalable community-based digital learning model that works for young people.

4.0 TARGET BENEFICIARIES

The project directly selected and trained 45 youth aged 18–30 years. These participants were selected through community outreach and screening processes that prioritized unemployed, underemployed, and low-income youth. Efforts were made to ensure gender inclusion and representation of young women in the program.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project adopted a structured, participatory, and results-driven implementation approach designed to ensure both learning effectiveness and measurable impact. The methodology combined community engagement, competency-based training, experiential learning, and continuous monitoring to maximize outcomes within the six-month implementation period.

- **Community-Based Targeting and Inclusive Participant Selection**

The project began with consultation visits to the training consultant, EPIQ ICT Consulting Services, Minna, Niger State, few orphanage, and local homes. Thereafter, meetings were held with caregivers and low-income parents to sensitize them on the need for skills development of their young ones. Local leaders, youth groups, and community-based organizations were also engaged to identify and confirm real backgrounds and status of the selected participants who would benefit most from digital skills training. This shows the level of transparency and inclusiveness in the selection process, prioritizing unemployed youth, women, school leavers, and individuals with limited opportunity, prospect and prior access to digital tools, ensuring equitable participation and resulted in 53% female representation, exceeding the initial gender target.

Baseline assessments (pre-training test) was conducted to determine participants' existing digital knowledge and employment status. This was a requirement from the agreements reached between CREAP Africa Initiative and EPIQ ICT Consulting Service at Minna, Niger State, and data informed curriculum customization and allowed the project team to measure progress over time.

- **2. Competency-Based Curriculum Design**

The training curriculum was structured around practical competencies aligned with labor market demands. Rather than focusing on theory alone, the program emphasized practical skill acquisition. The curriculum was divided into five integrated modules:

Modules	Course Description
Module 1	Basic computer operations, how to manage files, typing skills, and digital safety.
Module 2	Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, email communication, and online collaboration tools.
Module 3	Internet navigation and research techniques, information verification, and responsible digital behavior.
Module 4	Introduction to Digital Marketing and Basics of freelancing, online opportunities, and personal development.
Module 5	Introduction to Digital Entrepreneurship with emphasis on soft skills, communication, and career readiness

The curriculum was delivered over 24 weeks through structured sessions combining instructor-led teaching with supervised practical exercises. Each participant was required to complete practical assignments and a final project demonstrating acquired competencies.

- **Experiential and Practical Learning Model**

The project applied a “learn-by-doing” methodology to reinforce skill retention and confidence. Participants spent a significant portion of training time in supervised lab sessions where they practiced real-life tasks such as creating CVs, drafting business proposals, designing simple digital flyers, preparing presentations, and conducting structured online research.

Peer learning and teamwork were encouraged to build collaboration and communication skills. Facilitators provided continuous feedback and one-on-one support to participants who required additional guidance. This approach significantly improved learner confidence and reduced dropout rates, contributing to a 93% completion rate.

- **Mentorship and Career Orientation**

Beyond technical training, the project integrated mentorship and employability coaching. During the course of this project, participants received guidance on career planning, job search strategies, professional communication, and workplace expectations. There were regular visitors deliberately brought to lead some inspiration, career talks and sessions on digital freelancing platforms and online opportunities introduced youth to alternative earning pathways beyond traditional employment.

Guest facilitators and industry practitioners were invited to share insights and practical advice, exposing participants to real-world applications of digital skills. This exposure helped bridge the gap between training and economic opportunity.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Learning**

A structured Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework guided implementation. Baseline, midline, and endline assessments were conducted to measure knowledge acquisition, attendance, skill improvement, and behavioral changes. Attendance records, practical assignments, facilitator reports, and participant feedback surveys were systematically documented.

Continuous monitoring allowed the project team to adjust session pacing, provide additional support where needed, and ensure overall program quality. Data collected showed measurable improvement in digital competency levels across participants, with several initiating income-generating activities before the end of the project.

- **Graduation and Post-Training Engagement**

The project concluded with a brief, but informal graduation ceremony where participants presented final projects and received certificates of completion. This public recognition boosted confidence and community awareness of the initiative's impact.

To promote sustainability, participants were encouraged to remain connected through a digital alumni group, enabling peer support, information sharing, and potential collaboration opportunities beyond the training period.

The project adopted a blended learning model combining instructor-led sessions, practical work, peer collaboration, and real-life assignments. Training was delivered for 24 weeks, structured into thematic modules.

6.0 RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project delivered measurable and meaningful outcomes within its six-month implementation period. Beyond completing planned activities, the project achieved tangible improvements in participants' digital competencies, confidence, and early economic engagement.

- **Increased Digital Literacy and Technical Competence**

At project inception, baseline assessments revealed that the majority of participants had limited or no practical experience using computers beyond basic mobile phone usage. By the end of the 24-week training, 95% of participants demonstrated improved proficiency in core digital skills, including document preparation, spreadsheet usage, presentation development, professional email communication, and structured online research.

Participants successfully completed practical assignments and final projects that showcased their ability to apply knowledge independently. Many were able to create professional CVs, draft business proposals, design simple digital materials, and prepare structured presentations; skills that directly improve employability. The improvement from baseline to endline assessments confirmed significant knowledge acquisition and skill retention.

- **High Participation and Completion Rate**

Out of 45 enrolled participants, 42 completed the program, representing a 93% completion rate. This high retention rate reflects strong participant engagement, effective facilitation, and the relevance of the training content to youth aspirations. Notably, female participation reached 53%, exceeding the initial target and demonstrating the project's commitment to gender inclusion.

Attendance consistency and active participation during practical sessions indicated strong motivation among beneficiaries. The supportive learning environment and mentorship structure contributed significantly to maintaining engagement throughout the project duration.

- **Improved Employability and Income Pathways**

One of the most notable achievements was the early transition of several participants into income-generating activities. By the conclusion of the project, approximately 38% of participants had either:

- Applied for digital-related roles or internships in some private organizations,
- Begun offering basic digital services (e.g., typing, document formatting, graphic design support) to generate income, or
- Started exploring online freelancing platforms.

While full employment outcomes typically require longer-term tracking, early indicators demonstrate that the training provided practical tools that participants could immediately leverage. Many reported increased confidence in applying for jobs that previously seemed inaccessible due to digital skill requirements.

- **Enhanced Confidence and Mindset Shift**

Beyond technical skills, the project contributed significantly to shifts in participant mindset and self-perception. Many participants expressed increased confidence in using technology independently and navigating digital spaces responsibly. For several beneficiaries, this was their first structured exposure to computer-based learning, marking a transformational experience.

The mentorship and career guidance sessions encouraged participants to see digital tools not only as social platforms but as instruments for productivity, learning, and income generation. This mindset shift is a critical intangible outcome that supports long-term resilience in an evolving labor market.

- **Strengthened Institutional Capacity and Model Validation**

From an organizational perspective, the project validated CREAP Africa Initiative's community-based digital skills training model. The pilot demonstrated that with modest investment and structured methodology, measurable improvements in youth capacity can be achieved within a short timeframe.

The strong completion rate, positive participant feedback, and early employment indicators provide credible evidence for scaling the initiative. The project established a replicable framework that can be expanded to reach larger cohorts across additional states, and regions.

7.0 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

While the Youth Skills and Digital Future Project achieved its primary objectives, implementation was not without challenges. These experiences provided valuable lessons that will inform future scale-up efforts and strengthen program design.

- **Inconsistent Power Supply and Connectivity Limitations**

One of the most significant operational challenges was inconsistent electricity supply during training sessions. Periodic power outages disrupted scheduled sessions and required adjustments to the training timetable. Although mitigation strategies such as flexible scheduling and limited backup solutions (like the use of laptops to enable sustainable access to computers) were applied, interruptions occasionally reduced productive lab time.

Similarly, internet connectivity fluctuations affected certain practical sessions that required online research, email setup, or exposure to digital platforms. While offline exercises were introduced as alternatives, reliable connectivity remains a critical factor for digital skills training. This challenge highlighted the importance of investing in more robust backup power and connectivity systems in future implementations.

- **Varying Skill Levels Among Participants**

Participants entered the program with significantly different levels of prior exposure to digital tools. Some had basic familiarity with smartphones but little or no experience using computers, while a small number had limited previous training. This disparity required facilitators to adjust pacing, provide additional one-on-one support, and occasionally extend practical sessions to ensure no participant was left behind.

Although this presented a time management challenge, it also reinforced the need for differentiated instruction models and potentially pre-training orientation modules in future programs.

- **Limited Access to Personal Devices**

No participant owned personal laptops or computers outside the ones provided and used by the training provider. This restricted their ability to practice independently between sessions. While supervised lab hours provided structured learning opportunities, limited home practice slowed skill reinforcement for some participants.

This challenge underscored the broader digital access gap in underserved communities and emphasized the need for exploring device loan schemes or extended lab access hours in subsequent phases.

- **Economic Pressures on Participants**

Several participants faced financial pressures during the training period, including the need to engage in informal income-generating activities to support themselves or their families. Balancing training attendance with livelihood responsibilities posed occasional attendance constraints for a few participants.

Despite these pressures, the majority remained committed and completed the program. This experience highlights the importance of integrating flexible scheduling and, where possible, minimal participant support mechanisms to reduce dropout risk.

- **Short Implementation Timeline**

The six-month duration, while sufficient for foundational training, limited the depth of advanced specialization and long-term job placement support that could be provided. Although participants gained strong foundational skills, more extended mentorship and structured job linkage support would further strengthen employment outcomes.

This limitation provides a strong case for expanding future program phases to include longer-term follow-up, advanced modules, and stronger industry partnerships.

8.0 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project provided valuable insights into implementing digital skills training for underserved youth in Niger State. A key lesson was the critical importance of inclusive and targeted participant selection. Engaging local community leaders, youth groups, and stakeholders at the outset ensured transparency, built trust, and enhanced enrollment of participants who would benefit most from the program. Prioritizing women and marginalized youth not only strengthened equity but also demonstrated that with the right outreach, gender and socio-economic barriers can be effectively addressed in technical training programs.

Another important lesson was the value of hands-on, experiential learning and mentorship. Participants responded positively to practical exercises, lab sessions, and real-world projects, which reinforced knowledge retention and confidence. The integration of career guidance and mentorship components also proved essential in

translating technical skills into tangible income and employability opportunities. This reinforces the need for future programs to combine technical training with soft skills, entrepreneurship, and career development to achieve holistic outcomes.

Finally, the project highlighted the importance of flexible implementation and infrastructure readiness. Challenges such as intermittent power supply, limited internet connectivity, and varying participant skill levels emphasized the need for adaptive scheduling, offline learning resources, and differentiated instruction. Providing backup solutions, alternative teaching methods, and peer-support structures mitigated these constraints. These lessons underscore the value of resilience, adaptability, and local context awareness in designing effective digital skills programs that can be scaled sustainably.

9. SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP STRATEGY

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project established a robust foundation for long-term sustainability and the potential for scaled impact across Niger State and other states. Sustainability was approached on multiple fronts, including financial viability, community ownership, capacity building, and strategic partnerships.

- **Financial Sustainability**

To ensure ongoing program continuity, the project explored cost-efficient models and income-generating mechanisms. The partnership with EPIQ ICT Consulting Services can still be leveraged or an established community hub for post-project to offer paid upskilling workshops, short courses, and digital services to local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Revenue generated through these services can offset operating costs, including equipment maintenance, software licenses, and connectivity. Additionally, the project demonstrated that modest seed grants for digital micro-businesses can catalyze sustainable income streams, creating a self-reinforcing ecosystem where graduates invest back into the hubs as clients or peer mentors.

- **Capacity Building and Human Resource Sustainability**

A critical pillar of sustainability is the development of local human capital. The project trained participants not only in digital skills but also in mentoring and peer-coaching techniques. Graduates who exhibit strong aptitude are encouraged to serve as peer trainers, facilitators, or hub ambassadors in future cohorts. This “train-the-trainer” approach builds local capacity, reduces dependency on external facilitators, and creates

a multiplier effect, allowing the initiative to reach more youth without significantly increasing costs.

- **Strategic Partnerships and Ecosystem Integration**

The project actively cultivated partnerships with local institutions, including community leaders, service providers and youth groups. These partnerships provide access to infrastructure, equipment, certificates, and opportunities for participant to get trained and certified. Leveraging and expanding these partnerships allows the program to scale efficiently and sustainably while maintaining quality standards.

- **Scalable Program Design**

The pilot's modular and replicable curriculum provides a blueprint for scaling across other states and regions. Training modules are designed to be adaptable to varying skill levels, contexts, and participant needs. The blended learning approach — combining in-person labs, online resources, and mentorship — ensures flexibility and wide accessibility. Baseline and monitoring tools developed during the project can be replicated in future project to track outcomes, measure impact, and inform continuous improvement.

- **Community and Alumni Engagement**

Sustainability is further strengthened by fostering strong community ownership and alumni networks. Graduates remain connected through digital platforms, enabling peer-to-peer support, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Alumni are encouraged to mentor new cohorts, share success stories, and contribute to local digital development initiatives. This networked approach ensures that benefits extend beyond immediate participants, creating a long-term, community-driven impact.

10. CONCLUSION

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project in Niger State successfully demonstrated that targeted, practical digital skills training can transform the prospects of underserved youth. Through a structured combination of competency-based training, experiential learning, mentorship, and exposure to income-generating opportunities, participants acquired foundational digital literacy, enhanced employability, and an entrepreneurial mindset.

The project also highlighted critical lessons around inclusivity, infrastructure readiness, and adaptive program design, which will inform future scale-up efforts. Early

achievements—including a 93% completion rate, measurable skill gains, and initial economic engagement—underscore the program’s effectiveness and relevance.

With strong community partnerships, a scalable curriculum, and a clear sustainability strategy, the initiative offers a replicable model for expanding digital skills training to thousands of young Nigerians. By investing in youth capacity today, the project contributes to building a digitally competent, economically empowered, and socially engaged generation ready to thrive in Nigeria’s evolving digital economy.

The Youth Skills and Digital Future Project successfully demonstrated that targeted, community-based digital skills training can significantly enhance youth readiness for the digital economy within a short implementation period. The pilot’s impact validates the need for expansion and deeper investment in youth-focused digital innovation programs across Niger State and beyond.

CREAP Africa Initiative is profoundly grateful to the consultant, EPIQ ICT Consulting Services, the child care center, community leaders, youth groups, caregivers and parents of the participants for their partnership, supports and permission throughout the project period.

Appendix: Few Photos from the YSDF Project.



