

# Enabling the Youth to Learn, Work and Earn in a Smart Way



Source:

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The World Youth Skills Day (WYSD) designated by the United Nations has been marked for the first time this year. Understanding the importance of presenting youth with the opportunity to acquire market relevant skills, IICD joins this plea to foster initiatives aimed at equipping the youth with the necessary skills. These skills can support them transitioning into jobs and facilitating new entrepreneurial opportunities across different economic sectors.

With 75 million youths struggling to enter the workforce globally<sup>1</sup>, the urge to tackle youth unemployment has taken centre stage.

In order to address what the World Bank reports as “one of this century’s most pressing problems”<sup>2</sup>, IICD works hand in hand with the private and public sectors, academia, civil society and other industry partners to address youth unemployment in

Africa and Latin America. With the use of ICTs we enable youth to learn, work and earn in a smart way, improve their employability and increase business opportunities available for young people.

IICD's work on youth economic empowerment focuses on programmes that complete the cycle from training to employment or entrepreneurship, and leverage a blend of physical and online approaches to increase our reach and impact. Our training programmes reflect key trends, needs and opportunities of the market whereby we ask what the key growth industries are, what key skills sets are needed on the market and what key obstacles employers face in finding and retaining the right talent.

In addition to this, we provide the youth with not only core skills (industry-relevant) but also soft skills, such as communication, problem solving or work ethics, which are necessary for the young people to succeed in their work place. Aspiring entrepreneurs can access a range of courses, from legalities (how to register a business, how the taxation works), to business planning, working with clients, marketing and many other. In our programmes, training courses are complemented with career advice, mentorship and connections to like-minded peers, funds, incubators and accelerators that youth can benefit from. We proactively work with the hiring industry to connect youth with internships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

Our experience taught us that the greatest impact comes from collaboration with specialist organizations from the private, social and public sectors. In our work we value cross-sector partnerships which build on each partner's unique expertise to build demand-driven youth empowerment programmes. The partnerships we formed have a double-layer impact. From the youth perspective they provide young people with access to a broader range of complementary services and expertise. From an internal perspective, programmes which serve as partnership convergers tap into the best-in-class solutions, match resources and allow each partner to increase its impact and reach.

### **Youths accessing a full online ecosystem of services for employability and entrepreneurship in Ghana**

Recently, IICD in partnership with Microsoft launched the TizaaWorks online platform: a national one-stop online hub for employability and entrepreneurship. With the World Bank reporting that 65% of Ghanaian youth are unemployed, the platform is set to equip young graduates and school-leavers with the right hard and soft skills to bridge the skills gap and secure first-time job opportunities, in addition to providing career guidance and resources for those wanting to build their own businesses.

“Technology can empower young people to make a vital contribution to their community and our world. We hope that this platform serves as a bridge, connecting Ghana's young people to the tools, resources, and people they need to find the



As part of our youth skills programmes, we work with the *Tech Support Groups*, organisations in which youth gain hands-on experience by working on ICT projects for the public and private sectors.

*"Since joining Tech Support Ghana about 2 months ago, I feel like I can actually earn a living on these skills, especially compared to those I completed at Senior High School. The other day I managed to fix my cousin's computer, which had been down for the past 6 months. Although I did this for free I hope to do this again soon and earn an income for it."*

Mark Kubuga

fulfilling careers they deserve”, said Brad Smith, General Counsel and Executive Vice President, Legal and Corporate Affairs, Microsoft.



More than 500 youths have registered to TizaaWorks within two months of its launch and more than 340 have completed the online courses. The platform features several hundreds of job opportunities through the partnership with Jobberman, an African leading job agency.

"The challenges that lie to provide skills are not for the ones seeking jobs but for the ones that try to fill them", said Smith. According to Smith, regular schools, polytechnic or universities do not provide employment specific training, which is one of the issues that TizaaWorks seek to address. The project provides skills in the field of digital literacy, financial management, organisational skills and soft skills that altogether are paramount for enhancing the chance of employment or self-employment.

*"TizaaWorks is a great example of technology that can empower people to go out and achieve more in their lives. We almost never do anything of real importance by ourselves. It always comes from work with great partners [...] and one of them is IICD. What we always look for, as a company, in terms of working with other partners is that surprisingly to find people who are smarter than we are, that know things that we don't, who can do things we cannot do, that is definitely a description of IICD [...] that have been doing work not just here in Ghana but across Africa and other places,"* said Smith.

### **A new generation with a new set of skills**

Next to increasing opportunities provided by employment through digital skills, the growth in the agriculture sector is about two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors. This is important for 78% percent of the world's poor who live in rural areas and depend largely on farming to make a living<sup>3</sup>. To ensure the future viability of the agricultural sector it is therefore crucial to equip the farmers of tomorrow with the right skills and tools so they can access better production techniques and market-oriented strategies to help generate a sustainable source of income.



Gabriela Rubio, a young agro-ecological producer in the Cajamarca region of Peru, has developed skills to be able to collect and disseminate information at fairs, on television, and through radio programmes and social media to raise awareness about the benefits of agro-ecological products.

However, with the changing nature of global and local food systems, knowledge on how to produce good crop is no longer sufficient. Mr Ishmael Sunga, CEO of the Southern African Confederation of Farmers Unions (SACAU), sketched the future of agriculture at the recent Future of Farming in Africa conference, and talked about the shift in skills required for future generations of smallholders to be successful:

*“If you look at where agriculture is going now, in terms of the global food systems, it is increasingly complex, demanding, sophisticated, and its going to be knowledge intensive, its going to be information intensive - in fact information is fast becoming a key source of competitiveness. Those are the drivers of the future of agriculture. We shall want to locate the smallholder sector in that kind of a system - that is demanding and sophisticated, very abstract. Its no longer dependant on mastery of the skills to produce a good crop; that is half or maybe a quarter of what is now required. A lot of what is now required is up here [points to his head], not in your hands as it was in the past.*”

*Because of this complexity, this sophistication, one would argue that we now need a new generation of smallholder farmers. The future requires you to think, and thinking and interpretation requires a certain level of academic training. We need to push more young farmers into the system, not as employees but as business people in agriculture.*

*The future is going to be information intensive and it requires ICT platforms, [...] and it is perhaps the intersection between ICT and young farmers that is going to make a very dynamic combination.”*

IICD’s economic development programme in Western Kenya has endeavoured to address some of these changing skills needs by setting up farmer ICT hubs located near existing markets or collection centres frequented by the farmers. These centres provide agricultural information services to the farmer group members, as well as business development support services directly applied to the farming enterprises these farmers engage in, focusing on skills needed to grow their businesses as well as skills required to manage that business growth.

*“In my experience, you cannot create an entrepreneur, but you can create an environment that supports the farmers to develop an entrepreneurial mindset,”* said Gerry Boiyo, ICT officer of ICT-supported skills development programme in Western Kenya.

[1][http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_180976.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_180976.pdf)

[2]<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/10/08/global-coalition-tackle-youth-unemployment>

[3]World Bank, April 2015 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/overview#1>