

Reopening community skills development centres in Nigeria

Good practices



Responds to the following criteria

- ▶ Ownership
- ▶ Replicable
- ▶ Sustainable



Main stakeholders

- ▶ Households
- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Local leaders
- ▶ Local government
- ▶ Community mobilisers and structures
- ▶ Civil society organizations

▶ Description

Child labour in Nigeria is a challenge, with the most recent Nigeria Child Labour Survey 2022 revealing that a concerning 35.3% of children in the country aged 5 to 14 years old are working alongside their education. Among the 15 to 17-year-old age group, 21.9% of young people are engaged in work (ILO, 2024). Child labour not only deprives these children of their childhood, potential and dignity, but also poses a significant challenge to the completion of their schooling and is harmful to their physical and mental development. To address this problem, the ILO ACCEL Africa project was initiated to empower youth by equipping them with the essential skills that would make them economically self-reliant. This would allow them to access decent working opportunities, instead of relying on proceeds from child labour.

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of education, a significant barrier still exists in Nigeria: distance to school. In many parts of the country, communities do not have access to nearby centres for skills development and training opportunities. To this extent, ILO ACCEL Africa has identified a good practice in

reopening existing community skills development centres and providing easy access to training among 15 to 17 year olds. In Ondo State, the Fagbo Skills Acquisition Centre was identified, as it was located right in the heart of the community and did not require the youth to look for funds for their transportation to the centre. However, despite its ideal location, the centre had been dormant for over 15 years. The centre was built and funded by the government that was previously in power, but was closed down after the administration left.

An opportunity was recognised, and the Community Child Labour Monitoring Committee (CCLMC) composed of the community leader, women leader, youth leader, religious leader and school head, together with the NGO met with the local government chairman to convince him to reopen the centre. By presenting the concrete benefits of skills development and its role in the elimination of child labour, the CCLMC was able to successfully convince him. With support from the local government, the process of reopening the centre and kickstarting the skills development programme began (see details below).

► Description (Cont.)

Upon the opening of the skills development centre, sixty (60) youth aged 15 to 17 years old were enrolled and trained on different skills, such as tailoring, catering, barbering and hairdressing. They were provided with learning materials, and were also provided psychosocial support and training on how to access finance for their businesses.

The initiative culminated with these students completing their training programmes and receiving start-up kits for their ventures. To ensure that their new skills are put to use, open market days were organised for the graduates to showcase their products and services. The successful programme quickly became well-known within the community, and young people from other communities expressed their desire to join.

► Process

Reopening the skills development centre



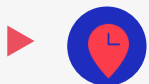
Identification of the skills development centre

When the ACCEL Africa project started, a mapping of skill centres in the communities was conducted. The project team discovered that there was a fully equipped centre that could be leveraged on to equip the children of working age with necessary skills. However, with the change of government, the centre had been closed for more than 15 years.



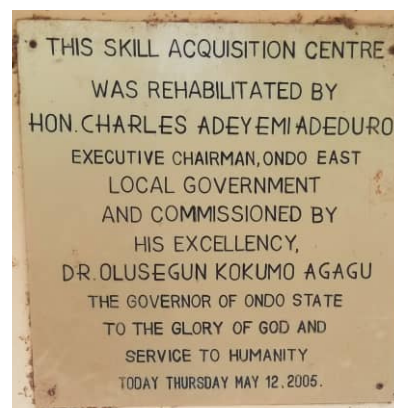
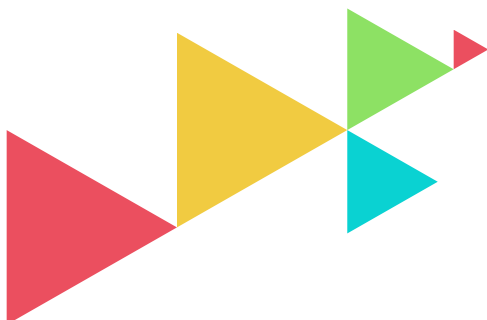
Lobbying by community stakeholders

To reopen the skills development centre, the CCLMC and other community stakeholders (e.g., community leader, women leader, a former counsellor) met with the local government chairman and explained to him the benefits of reopening the centre. Well convinced, he then agreed to advocate for its rehabilitation and reopening, as well as the mobilisation of resources (e.g., trainers). A counsellor in the community funded the critical repairs made to the existing but long-unused equipment, while the local government supported with the clearing and repairs of the roof, rendering the centre operational once again.



Opening ceremony

With the approval of the local government chairman, a date was fixed for the reopening of the centre, and awareness-raising efforts were conducted in the community. On the day, the chairman himself was present to officially reopen the centre, and his support signalled to the community the importance of the centre and its role in skills development of the youth.



Identifying youth eligible for training



Situation analysis

Researchers from an academic institution were contracted to assess the communities and identify their reasons for resorting to child labour. By using a mixture of quantitative (e.g., validated questionnaires) and qualitative research (e.g., key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observations) methods, the study revealed that there are various reasons why children in these communities were working instead of attending school, such as poverty, cultural and religious beliefs, poor educational system, inadequate social protection strategies, and lack of knowledge about the harmful effects of child labour.



Development of list of vulnerable children

The study also produced a list of families in the lowest economic tiers and who had children in child labour who required support. The data was compiled into a situation analysis report and shared with key stakeholders through an online meeting. The list also identified the skills that the youth would like to develop through the training programme.



Verification of the list of vulnerable children

Members from non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society (e.g., Kids & Teens Resource Centre's Programme Manager, M&E Officer supported by Community Engagement Officers) returned to the communities for a detailed mapping and profiling exercise. This step was conducted to confirm the list of vulnerable children that was identified through the situation analysis. Project workers verified the information through direct interactions with the families and used vulnerability indicators (e.g., children trafficked or in child labour, children with disabilities, children living in a child-headed household, children living with parents/caregivers, orphans) to reassess the children's situations. In cases where certain children had either moved away or were not as vulnerable as initially thought, they were removed from the list.



Inclusive decision making

The final list of children to be included in the skills development programme was reviewed and approved. Local stakeholders, such as the women leader, youth leader, community head, cocoa farmers' representatives, head teachers and other influential figures in the community, were consistently involved in the process of deciding on the final list of children. This ensured that the interventions were community-driven and accepted by all members.

Recruiting trainers from the community



Identification of trainers

The project team initially thought of reaching out to trainers from another area, but realised that transport costs would be a challenge. Instead, they decided to look at people who were readily available in the community, where there were already members who were running successful businesses. The CLMCC went to the community to conduct advocacy efforts and identify tailors, caterers, barbers and hairdressers as trainers of the programme.



Child labour advocacy for trainers

The CLMCC and the Kids & Teens Resource Centre paid advocacy visits to the tailors, caterers, barbers and hairdressers and discussed with them the role of skills development in the elimination of child labour. Convincing them about the added value of sharing their skills with the youth of their communities, a suitable training schedule at the centre was agreed upon with the trainers.



Training of trainers

The ILO ACCEL Africa team provided the trainers pedagogical support to build their skills as mentors, as well as trained on how to provide psychosocial support to the youth. Beyond the development of skills in certain crafts, this would allow the youth to acquire additional knowledge about other relevant topics, such as conflict resolution and teenage pregnancy.

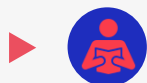
Implementing the skills development programme



Provision of material support

The ILO, through the ACCEL Africa project, provided monetary support to purchase materials that the youth could use during hands-on training (e.g., scissors, thread and paper moulds for tailoring; flour, egg, water and baking materials for catering; hair dryers, hair creams, combs and hair rollers for hairdressing; mirrors for barbering). Providing such concrete materials and using a job-training model (instead of a formal curricula) ensured that the youth were not only learning theoretical knowledge, but were instead learning through hands-on practice.





Entrepreneurial training

In addition to developing craft-related skills, the NGO also trained the youth using the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) methodology, where they were equipped with entrepreneurial skills. The NGO tailored the training to the youth's level of understanding by using local languages, making concepts as simple as possible, and using examples from their own community that they could relate with.



Training on access to finance

The ILO ACCEL Africa team also brought in Riby, a financial service provider, to provide access to finance among the trained youth. This allowed them to obtain loans and other financing options needed to launch their businesses, as well as receive financial guidance.

► Monitoring and ensuring sustainability of results

The beneficiaries were monitored by the Community Engagement Officers and the CCLMC throughout the skills development programme to ensure regular attendance and completion of the training. The CCLMC were also part of the equipment handover exercise and helped ensure that the equipment was used for the intended purposes.

After the youth had accomplished the skills development programme, the CCLMC also ensured that the recipients of the start-up kits used them as intended, rather than selling them, to benefit the community's sustainability. All of the youth trained through the programme were able to start their own businesses. The CCLMC regularly used a WhatsApp group to provide frequent updates to the Kids & Teens Resource Centre, who then continued to provide support where needed and conducted their own monitoring visits.

During one of the NGO's visits, they discovered that the communities strongly support the programme graduates' businesses. Those who were trained as tailors were asked to make school uniforms for children in the community, while those who were trained as caterers were engaged in social functions, such as birthdays and meetings in the community. The community has also organised open market days where people from other areas could come and buy their products.





► Enabling Factors

► Trusted agents in the community

The entire process of reopening the skills development centre was made possible by the CCLMC, which served as the entry point into the community. The CCLMC was composed of respected community members, which made it easier for the ILO and NGO project teams to access influential stakeholders, such as the local government chairman. Instead of going through the usual protocol of writing letters and constantly following up, they were able to schedule a call with him very easily and convince him to open the skills development centre.

► Community-driven decision-making

The solutions that were designed for the project were not just decided in an office but rather came from the community members themselves. The voices of the beneficiaries were taken into consideration, for instance, through a needs assessment that identified the skills that the youth wanted to learn and had decided on, instead of imposing an irrelevant curriculum on them.

► Funding for resources

Financial support from the ILO through the ACCEL Africa project, helped secure materials that were needed for the training programme (e.g., scissors, thread and paper moulds for tailoring; flour, egg, water and baking materials for catering; hair dryers, hair creams, combs and hair rollers for hairdressing; mirrors for barbering). The provision of these materials helped ensure that the youth were learning through hands-on practice instead of only pure theoretical knowledge.

► Political support from local government officials

High-level support from the local government chairman was an essential factor that boosted the credibility of the programme within the community. His personal attendance at the opening ceremony gave the signal that the project was important, and his visits to the centre to check on the youth gave them motivation to finish the training programme.

► Strategic use of existing resources

The project made strategic and cost-effective use of existing resources in the community. For instance, the skills development centre was already built and already had equipment. While it required some repairs and had to be reopened, there was no longer a need to build an entirely new facility, helping save costs and time. When recruiting trainers, the project also reached out to existing hairdressers, barbers, tailors and caterers in the community instead of asking people from other areas, not only helping save transport costs but also fostering a stronger sense of cohesion within the community.

► Post-training opportunities to apply knowledge

Sustainable post-training opportunities, such as business development, access to credit, and job placement programmes helped the youth apply their newly acquired skills in productive and meaningful ways. The community organised open market days, where people from neighbouring areas could come to see their products and avail of their services. This ensured that the youth were able to apply what they had learned and make profit from their new businesses.