



Learning Memo

Digital Skills for Connected Jobs: Empowering Refugees and Host Communities

Learning Lab #2

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The impact of digital transformation job opportunities and skills demand

- ▶ **Evolving work landscape:** Digital technology both creates and destroys jobs; research indicates a mix of downsizing and expansion intentions among employers regarding workforce changes due to new technology integration. Additionally, work structure shifts toward task-focused digital gigs through contractors, posing concerns about working conditions in the gig economy.
- ▶ **Changing demand for digital skills:** Automation reshapes skills demands in all sectors, including people-oriented roles. Yet, digital skill demand varies across countries and subsectors, with an increasing share of all jobs requiring at least a basic level of digital skills.
- ▶ **Skills for the digital economy:** Digital economy skills encompass digital skills and also require competencies like literacy, numeracy, analytical thinking, and communication. Success requires proficiency in both categories.

Country-level digital skill supply and demand assessments: South Africa and Nigeria

- ▶ **Demand for digital skills and digital roles:** According to a recent ILO survey in Nigeria, 35 percent of employers struggle to find talent with basic skills, while 30 per cent face challenges in finding talent with advanced skills. Anticipated growth of occupations within the digital economy in the next five years include microwork, website management, and design.
- ▶ **Support needed by youth:** In Nigeria, young people indicate that they require both financial assistance to access digital skills training as well as better information about where and how to find skills development offers..
- ▶ **Digital skill gap:** In South Africa, a digital skills gap analysis highlights disparities between employer-anticipated skills and youth's current skill sets, particularly in

intermediate digital skills, for instance digital marketing. Overall findings emphasize increasing demand for digital skills across sectors.

- ▶ **Opportunities** in the digital economy span well beyond ICT, extending to sectors like agriculture, e-commerce, and online learning. These varied applications require skills to seize entrepreneurial prospects.

Gaza Sky Geeks

- ▶ **Context:** GSK operates in Palestine, where young people face limited mobility. A long-standing blockade has undermined Gaza's economy, resulting in high unemployment despite young people's high level of education. GSK is operating a project in collaboration with Mercy Corps to improve access to the potential of online and remote work.
- ▶ **Goals:** GSK aims to upskill highly educated young people in Palestine, enabling them to become specialists with expertise and compete in the global labour market. Furthermore, GSK supports young people in accessing income opportunities from overseas, for instance as part of remote teams for companies. Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen the local economy.
- ▶ **Programmes:** Through a hybrid delivery, GSK trained around 5,000 individuals in the last year offering both longer programs of four to five months (full-time), for instance to educate trainees as stack developers, while also providing shorter programmes that focus on highly specialised skills. GSK also provides freelance training with a view to maximise the opportunities from platforms such as Upwork. In addition to technical skills, GSK offers soft skills training that includes English language, interview preparation and communication classes, through a programme developed in collaboration with the British Council. One shortfall was the limited teamwork experience that students are exposed to. Finally, GSK provides support in job search linking individuals with both local and international companies.
- ▶ **Challenges and strategies:** There is substantial global competition in online work. With its high cost of living, young people in Palestine need to be empowered to take on higher-revenue roles in the digital economy, with a focus on, with a focus on mid-level to senior tech positions. Other challenges relate to the electricity shortage in Gaza, partially addressed by GSK by having generators and providing a workspace for their trainees. An additional concern is payment of salaries from overseas employers due to restrictions on foreign exchange inflows.
- ▶ **Employment opportunities:** While freelancing aims to equip trainees with skills to secure remote gigs, it falls short of ensuring sustainable employment. Remote work with overseas companies offers better pay, and greater stability. Ideally, talent is referred to local companies who are then empowered to take on online work from overseas.

Learning Lions upskilling initiative

- ▶ **Context:** Learning Lions operates as a training institution and digital online freelancing agency within Turkana County in Kenya, a semi-arid region where the population faces challenges in terms of access to education, infrastructure and resources.
- ▶ **Goals:** Learning Lions supports young people in rural Kenya in earning an income while remaining with their families. This is mitigating brain drain in the region and ensuring that economic gains benefit local communities.
- ▶ **Programme:** Digital skills training starts with basic digital literacy training, delivered during an intense on-campus in-person programme. A share of young people is advancing to the second level which covers coding, graphic design, and other advanced skills. The third level assesses and supports their ability to work effectively in a variety of highly specialized IT occupations. Learning Lions is also offering soft skills training which includes personal development, financial management, communication and more.
- ▶ **Challenges and strategies:** The drop-out rate between courses of different levels is high, in part due to the entry level offerings of initial courses and the limited exposure of students to digital technologies prior to enrolling in training with Learning Lions. Moreover, students struggle with professional communication and meeting deadlines. Additional training is provided, and students are directed to attend Open University courses to enhance these skills.
- ▶ **Employment:** Learning Lions provide freelancing training, however, freelancing often entails rejection and takes time to develop. Learning Lions partners with companies to create specific talent pools for their needs. For instance, collaboration with Cocomore focuses on training in PHP, Java, and Drupal languages for front-end development roles in the company.

Key resources

- ▶ World Economic Forum (2023): [How to bridge the demand gap for tech freelancers in developing economies](#)
- ▶ Upwork (2023): [The most in-demand skills and jobs for 2023 and beyond](#)
- ▶ GSK, Upwork (2023): [Upwork and Gaza Sky Geeks Bring Remote Work To Gaza](#)
- ▶ GSK, British Council (2023) [@Palestine: English for the Digital Economy](#)
- ▶ ILO-EU (2022) [Digital Skills and Job Platforms, Digitalization and Employment](#)
- ▶ Skills Future Singapore (2022): [Skills demand for the future economy](#)
- ▶ The Abdul Latif Jameel World Education Lab (J-WEL): [The Human Skills Matrix](#)
- ▶ ILO (2021): [Shaping skills and lifelong learning for the future of work](#)
- ▶ ITU (2021): [Digital Skills Assessment Guidebook | ITU Academy](#)
- ▶ World Economic Forum (2023): [The future of jobs report](#)