



Supporting Youth Employment through the Apprenticeship Model: Outcomes and Lessons from Ghana

Introduction

In Ghana, the construction industry is booming, growing at an average eight percent per annum due to a growing economy, infrastructural development, rapid urbanization and a rising middle class. The growth of the sector has resulted in an unmet demand for skilled labor. While youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years make up 42 percent of the country's population, the *Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 3* reports that they face high unemployment rates of approximately 23 percent in Accra and 16 percent in other urban areas. The construction sector not only offers significant potential for creating economic opportunities for youth but it also provides more training opportunities than any other sector in Ghana.¹

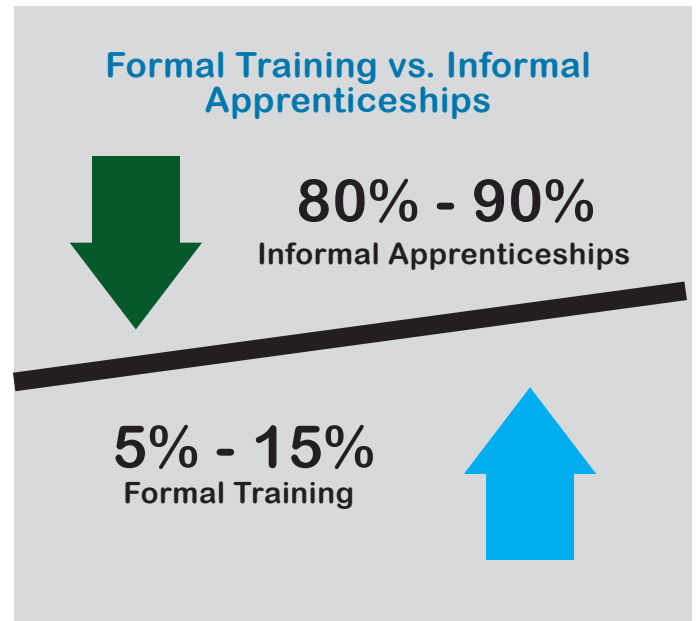
The fastest, most cost-effective way for disadvantaged young people to learn construction trades is through apprenticeships. A World Bank study notes that apprenticeship is the most important source of training for workers in the informal sector. According to the study, 80 to 90 percent of all basic skills training in Ghana comes

¹Darko, M. and A. Lowe. 2016. Ghana's construction sector and youth employment. Overseas Development Institute. Accessed at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10787.pdf>.

Launched in 2015, YIEDIE is a five-year project to create economic opportunities in Ghana's construction sector for economically disadvantaged youth. It is implemented by Global Communities in partnership with Mastercard Foundation and Opportunities Industrialization Centre, Ghana, African Aurora Business Network, Republic-Boafo Microfinance Services and Artisans Association of Ghana. YIEDIE targeted five of Ghana's largest cities—Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Ashaiman and Tema.

from traditional or informal apprenticeship, compared with five to 10 percent from public training institutions and 10 to 15 percent from non-government for-profit and non-profit training providers.

Given the above, the **Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE)**, a project designed to create economic opportunities for nearly 24,000 disadvantaged youth in the Ghanaian construction sector, determined to leverage this traditional system to create an improved model for high-quality, short-term skills training. Of the total, approximately 14,000 youth were targeted for technical skills training via apprenticeship.² This brief outlines the elements of the improved apprenticeship model developed by YIEDIE and examines its effectiveness as an avenue to provide skills training to disadvantaged youth and facilitate their entry into employment, along with providing some lessons learned.



The Traditional Apprenticeship Model

The traditional apprenticeship model in Ghana involves an arrangement between the prospective apprentice and/or their guardian and a master craftsman (MCP) of choice. After a contract between a MCP and apprentice is developed, the apprentice pays a training fee set by the MCP usually due in two installments before training starts and before graduation. Typically, master craftspeople have five to 10 apprentices at one given time. The apprentice learns a trade or skill through hands-on training from the MCP at his/her worksite for a recognized period, which is usually three to five years. An apprentice's graduation is partially based on his or her demonstrated competency and partly based on their relationship with the MCP. Upon completion of the apprenticeship training, some apprentices opt to register for national trade qualifications tests through the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI).

Traditional apprenticeship training is a low-cost method of skills training, provides learning opportunities to individuals who lack the educational requirements for formal training, and serves important target groups such as rural populations and the urban poor. However, after the training, the apprentice is only as competent as his or her MCP.

The Improved Apprenticeship Model

The YIEDIE project built upon and enhanced an improved apprenticeship model that consortium partner Opportunities Industrialization Centre, Ghana (OICG), a technical and vocational training institute, designed. At start up, YIEDIE commissioned a labor market skills gap assessment that identified 16 trade areas that had the potential to provide the most opportunities for youth. OICG worked with NVTI and master craftspeople to outline apprenticeship curricula that ensured that in three to six months, rather than the traditional one to three years, apprentices would have covered the skills needed to obtain national Proficiency 1 certification. The sixteen trades with market demand for semi-skilled workers identified within the construction sector were: masonry, plaster of Paris design, tiling, plumbing, metal fabrication, carpentry, heavy machine operations, draftsmanship, electrical work, painting, fiberglass and aluminum fabrication, survey technical assistant, interior décor, road signal installation and steel bending.³

² The other 9,000 enrolled in entrepreneurship and soft skills training, preparing them to take advantage of self-employment opportunities in the construction sector.

³ Due to a lack of market demand, road signal installation and filling station canopy fabrication were removed from the list of YIEDIE-supported trade areas.

The elements of improved apprenticeship are as follows:

Curriculum Development. OICG and NVTI worked with MCP to develop apprenticeship curricula and training manuals that met industry needs and prepared the youth to take the NVTI Proficiency I examinations. The curricula are divided into weekly modules and are accompanied by a week-long entrepreneurship, financial literacy and life skills training offered by OICG, NVTI and the MCP. The curricula is revised annually to reflect current trends in the industry.

Identification and training of MCP. OICG leads technical skills training under YIEDIE, though additional technical and vocational education and training (TVET) partners have been engaged as apprenticeship providers for the project. The process begins with identifying MCP who have interest and meet a set of selection criteria. Different approaches are used in scouting for MCP; some artisans are known to TVET providers from previous projects while some are recommended by other MCPs. Community outreach is also done to identify them.

OICG uses nine criteria to select master trainers:

- Experience in providing vocational skills training to apprentices
- Quality of products/services
- State of trainer's business
- Location of workshop/site
- Availability/adequacy of appropriate tools or equipment at workshop
- Interest in the training model
- Educational background of at least middle school completion certificate
- Availability of an assistant for the purpose of regular training activities
- Reputation in the vicinity

MCP are vetted through a screening interview to ensure that the right caliber of artisans are selected. Safety practices and safe environments are also considered. Upon selection, a contract or MOU is signed between OICG and the MCP that outlines the target number of youth to be trained, terms of payment and the reporting and monitoring schedule, and includes a clause on child protection and consent. Subsequently, an orientation is held for the MCP outlining the skills and proficiencies youth are expected to learn within the apprenticeship duration. When training starts, monitoring at project sites is done to ensure training standards are met.

Youth placement. Youth are assigned to MCP based on their interest in particular trade areas, distance from their homes, and numbers agreed on with the MCP in the contract or MOU. The apprenticeship lasts three to six months depending on the trade area—interior décor takes three months but youth train for six months in the majority of trade areas.



Materials provision. YIEDIE provides apprentices with personal protective equipment for safety along with consumable materials for training and skills practice. The utilization of the materials is monitored during field visits.

Entrepreneurship training and counselling sessions. The week-long entrepreneurship training apprentices receive is based on a curriculum developed by YIEDIE to ensure that youth have the skills needed to start and manage their own businesses successfully.⁴ The entrepreneurship training is contained in three components: financial literacy, entrepreneurship and the life planning or soft skills component. Youth are trained on money management and savings, employment, decision-making, business planning, and problem solving among other topics. Financial service providers offer the financial literacy training and provide opportunities to open accounts.

Youth also receive individual and group counselling from trained counsellors on the staff of OICG and the other TVET partners. Group counselling usually takes place before training begins and individual counselling during the course of training. Individual counselling is offered when behavioral issues or poor attendance are identified or when young people have conflicts with their peers or MCP.

Certification. Nationally-recognized skills certification plays a significant role in demonstrating to potential employers and clients that youth have acquired the relevant competencies in their specific trade area. Therefore, YIEDIE finances the registration and examination fees for selected youth to take the NVTI Proficiency level 1 exam—a non-written, competency-based skill test—or the professional licenses required by some trades, e.g., Energy Commission certification for electrical technicians and driver’s licenses for heavy machine operators. Trainees who exhibit commitment to the training through a 95% attendance rate and demonstrate high levels of proficiency in their trade are eligible for project support. In addition to the NVTI certification, YIEDIE provides a certificate of participation issued by the TVET institution overseeing the apprenticeship.

⁴ The stand-alone entrepreneurship and soft skills training lasts three weeks.





Traditional Apprenticeship

vs.

Improved Apprenticeship

Verbal or written agreement between MCP and apprentice or parents.



Youth enroll in YIEDIE/a TVET institution and an MOU is signed between MCP and the TVET partner.

Average duration of 3 years.



Duration is generally 6 months.

Fees vary widely between \$40 and \$140. Apprentices also pay for their own supplies, fees and uniforms.



Training is free to youth in YIEDIE. For non-YIEDIE youth, OICG charges \$100 in fees for improved apprenticeship along with the cost of practice materials and personal protective equipment.

Assessment done by master trainer. Apprentices can opt to register for NVTI certification test on their own.



Youth are assisted to obtain NVTI certification or receive licenses from other professional bodies.

No formal entry or educational requirements.



YIEDIE enrolled young people who had a basic education but had not gone beyond senior secondary school.

Outcomes

Over five years, YIEDIE trained 16,020 youth (12,775 men and 3,245 women) via the improved apprenticeship model, engaging 1,787 master trainers. Interior decoration had the largest number of youth apprentices, as most female apprentices chose to train in this field rather than in traditionally male trade areas. As a result, YIEDIE placed a cap on the number of applications for interior décor midway through the project. This, ultimately increased the number of female apprentices in other trade areas such as the 157 young women who studied painting and 106 who were trained in heavy machine operation. Electrical technician was the second most popular trade area with 2,759 youth apprentices.

While 95% of the apprentices had completed primary school prior to YIEDIE, only 44% graduated from senior high school. At enrollment, 7% (15% of the women) reported having children, 1% were married and 83% received financial support from others.

A follow-up study conducted with 612 youth who had completed apprenticeships one year earlier found that 66% had been employed or self-employed in the past 12 months compared to only 12% at enrollment. Of those, 27% had a business (from 3% at baseline), 48% worked for others, and 15% had multiple livelihoods. In a survey of 708 MCP, 26% of the 4,815 youth they had trained under YIEDIE continued to work with or were employed by them. The youth follow-up also found increases in job satisfaction from baseline.

YIEDIE surveyed master craftspeople in each trade area on their experiences with the improved apprenticeship model and associated training curricula. They expressed satisfaction with the structure it provides for training and noted that it improves youth performance in learning trade skills. They view the YIEDIE curriculum as an effective guide to plan their lessons with its weekly modules that provide session objectives and learning outcomes for each topic. After project support had ended, most of the master trainers continue to provide condensed and intensive training, offering the YIEDIE curriculum as developed or using it as a supporting tool to enhance their pre-established method of training.

Trade Area	Number of Youth Trained
Carpentry	506
Draftsmanship	183
Electrical technician	2,759
Fiberglass and aluminum fabrication	2,291
Interior decoration	2,931
Heavy machine operation	2,287
Masonry	1,122
Metal fabrication	1,721
Painting	578
Plaster of Paris design	77
Plumbing	421
Steel bending	292
Survey technical assistant	141
Tile laying	711
Grand Total	16,020

JOB SATISFACTION		
	Baseline	Follow Up
All	63%	73%**
Male	64%	72%**
Female	59%	75%

**Change in baseline to follow-up is significant with a p-value <0.01



Lessons Learned

1. YIEDIE designed intensive courses assuming that the requisite skills for Proficiency 1 certification could be delivered in six months for all trades. While masters deemed this time period sufficient in some trades like painting, electricians and those in metal fabrication found it too short to ensure apprentices acquired the necessary skills. Similarly, YIEDIE found that after the six-month period, many youth chose to remain apprentices of their MCP to continue learning their trade.
2. Although the curriculum outlined the topics to be covered each week in training sessions, YIEDIE found variations in what was covered and the length of time modules took between cohorts of apprentices. These were attributed to the lack of contracts the MCP had at the time under which apprentices could practice their new skills.
3. YIEDIE set high targets for women's enrollment in training despite the male-dominated nature of the construction sector. While it achieved a 30% female participation rate, most women completed entrepreneurship training or an apprenticeship in interior décor, employment options that are in line with gendered social norms. Generous incentives, female mentors, family engagement and other best practices have only a limited impact in shifting these in a short project period.

Recommendations

1. Monitoring training sites, particularly with periodic unannounced visits, combined with performance assessments for MCPs, is important to ensure that training is done according to the guidelines set in the curriculum and progressing appropriately. Site visits also provide an opportunity for the monitoring team to receive feedback from the MCP and trainees to address challenges while performance assessments provide crucial feedback to MCPs.
2. Early consultation with master trainers is essential to determine the requisite training period for different trades. In addition, pre-training assessments of baseline competencies can maximize the benefits for youth and allow some customization of training programs.
3. Placing apprentices with MCP located near them is crucially important in maintaining attendance and limiting transportation costs.
4. Along with building young women's confidence and skills to cope with harassment working in male-dominated settings, include a code of conduct in the contracts signed by MCPs and provide gender sensitivity and anti-harassment training on-site to them and male trainees.⁵

⁵ For more recommendations on engaging women in construction, please see the Overseas Development Institute's brief, *Creating opportunities for young women in Ghana's construction sector: What works?* found at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/12665.pdf>.



The Youth Forward initiative links young people to quality employment or entrepreneurship opportunities in the agricultural and construction sectors in Ghana and Uganda. This five-year partnership led by Mastercard Foundation, Overseas Development Institute, Global Communities, Solidaridad, NCBA CLUSA, and GOAL will reach more than 200,000 economically disadvantaged youth aged 15–24. The initiative uses an approach that combines market-relevant skills training, mentorship, internships, and access to financial services to help young people better their lives, transition to sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to social and economic change.

The Youth Forward Learning Partnership works across the initiative to develop an evidence-informed understanding of the needs of young people in Ghana and Uganda and how the program can best meet those needs.



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