

Skills 4 Riders in Nigeria: policy recommendations

VET Toolbox project: training of delivery/courier riders in the gig economy in Lagos



The VET Toolbox programme aims to improve the effectiveness of VET systems in selected sub-Saharan African countries by making them more opportunity-driven, turning investments into drivers for inclusive economic growth, social development, and decent job creation. It is co-funded by the European Union (EU) and the German Government (BMZ), and implemented by the British Council, Expertise France, GIZ, and LuxDev. GIZ is implementing the VET Toolbox in Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda.”

Context

Opportunity draws hundreds of thousands of people every year to Lagos, Africa's most populous city. But many do not find that opportunity easily.

The story is in the numbers: the unemployment and underemployment rates for the fourth quarter of 2022 were 33.3% and 22.8% respectively, according to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics¹; worryingly, youth unemployment and underemployment figures were at 42.1% and 21%. It is hard to find decent work, especially for young people and women, in Nigeria.

One solution for Lagosians involves the gig economy. This is a free-market labour system in which people accept "gigs": short-term or freelance work. This makes sourcing labour easier and more cost-effective for companies; workers, in turn, enjoy flexibility in how they work and earn. It is Nigerian government policy to harness the gig economy to reduce unemployment.

Central to the success of the gig economy are the people who deliver goods. This type of work offers young people the opportunity to find decent employment but deriving the greatest success – for them, companies, customers and the country – requires professionalising riders into workers who have road safety, digital, customer service and personal financial skills.

That is achieved through creating and providing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) resources focused on dispatch riders, and promoting fair work and decent working conditions for them. But these can only be realised in a proper policy environment.

It was within this context that the VET Toolbox project in Nigeria developed S4R. The VET Toolbox programme aims to improve the effectiveness of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems in selected Sub-Saharan African countries by

making them more opportunity-driven, turning investments into drivers for inclusive economic growth, social development, and decent job creation. It is co-funded by the European Union (EU) and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and implemented by Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency; the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency (LuxDev); the British Council (BC); Expertise France (EF); and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Apart from Nigeria, GIZ implements VET Toolbox actions in Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania.

The VET Toolbox follows an opportunity-driven approach, accompanying investments to help improve local benefits by addressing skills gaps. In Nigeria, it has developed the Skills for Riders (S4R) training platform and has supported the development of training offerings, public-private dialogue and capacity building through training of trainers to professionalise the motorcycle delivery sector, and potentially incorporate such training into the formal TVET sector.

This initiative required stakeholder partnerships, including with the Lagos State Ministry of Transportation (MoT); the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST), which has the federal mandate to regulate the courier and logistics industry, including rider training; LASDRI, an agency responsible for training and licensing professional drivers in Lagos state; Jobberman, a service that matches jobseekers with employers; the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF), a Lagos State agency tasked with tackling unemployment, and promoting wealth and job creation; and private sector players including Glovo, Errand NG, Bolt, Gokada and many more.

¹ <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>

S4R's blended learning approach provides an affordable training platform to gig-economy operators, which can be integrated into their own training. It teaches riders to be customer-facing, and to be safer road users. While some training is in-person, most is e-learning that comprises a series of short, 10- to 15-minute online modules riders complete at their convenience - so they do

not have to choose between learning and working.

Realising both of S4R's primary aims - the professionalisation of dispatch riders through formal TVET training, and the promotion of employment - requires a robust policy environment, however. This document makes policy recommendations that support both.

Policy recommendations

A lot of work and stakeholder commitment has gone into creating the S4R programme, which holds the potential not only to create meaningful jobs with decent incomes in Lagos, but everywhere. It stands to reason that those who were involved in its creation, from GIZ to Nigeria's public and private sectors, want to see it succeed; now that

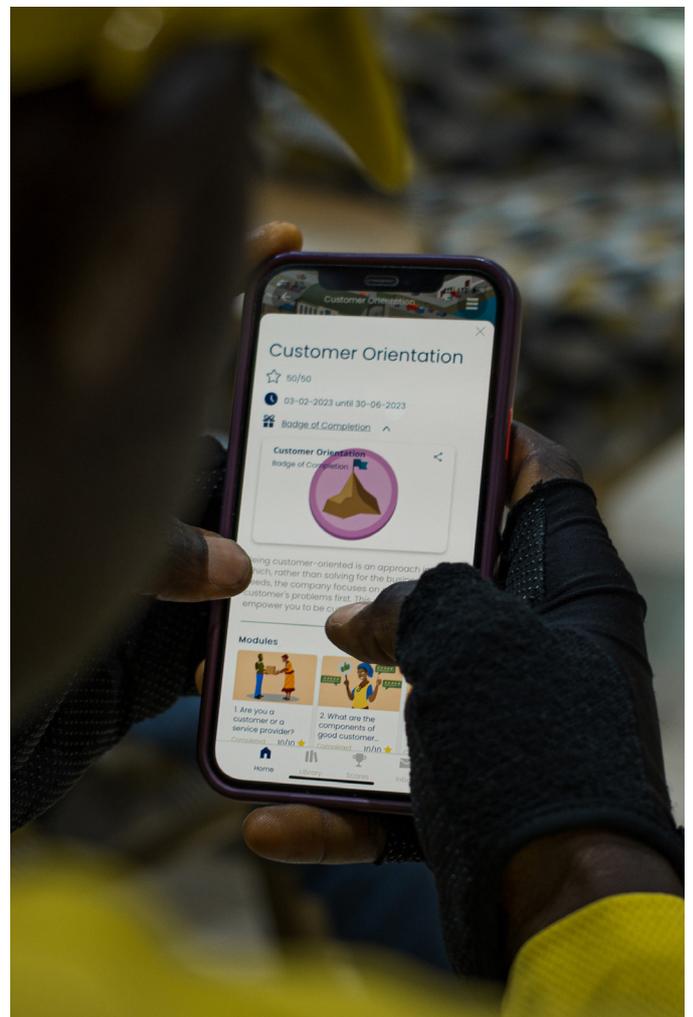
GIZ has fulfilled its mandate and helped to create S4R, it is up to the partners to see it live on.

A favourable policy environment will assist them to do this, in particular in the TVET space. Thus, the following policy recommendations are made.

Policy recommendation 1: standardise dispatch rider training

There is currently no formal qualification in Nigeria for dispatch riders - in fact, for any kind of logistics delivery worker. It stands to reason that developing industry-driven national occupational standards, as well as accrediting the e-learning curriculum through bodies such as the NBTE, so that it can be used by TVET institutions and licensing entities such as the Lagos State MoT or NIPOST, will drive the professionalisation of dispatch riding as an occupation in the gig economy sector.

Dispatch riding as a standardised qualification will be further promoted by registering the S4R e-learning platform content with the existing Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). Competency-based modules on road safety, customer service, and digital and financial literacy can also be integrated into other relevant vocational training programmes around logistics, delivery services and transport.



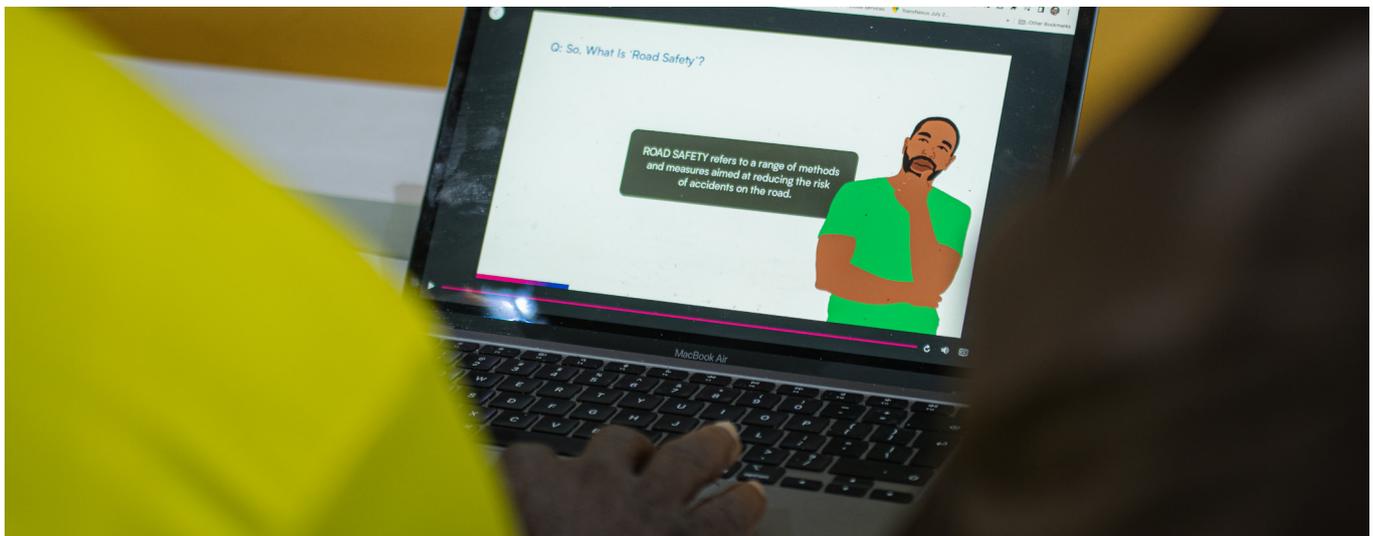
As online and blended learning approaches are novel in the Nigerian TVET and corporate training spaces, existing assessment and recognition of prior learning (RPL) mechanisms may not be sufficient to gauge learners' upskilling. Assessment methods, and credit-transfer and articulation schemes, must thus be revisited to incorporate e-learning modules, so that such training can be included in certification schemes and improve trainees' employability.

Importantly, institutionalising a formalised e-learning platform within the licensing process for professional dispatch riders will ensure that all licensed riders possess the necessary competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) required by regulators such as the MoT or NIPOST. This promotes professionalism, adherence to road

safety regulations and better service delivery within the gig economy.

The stakeholders in the S4R programme – the authorities, training institutions, gig-economy employers, labour experts and dispatch riders themselves – are unanimous: training is vital if the employment potential of the gig economy is to be fully realised (in line with federal government policy around this labour sector) in Lagos, and ideally further afield.

The training content, which is comprehensive, practical and modern in its approach, has been created. It provides a training standard for both the TVET system and private companies. Now it must be officially adopted into the TVET system, where a place for it certainly exists, and implemented.



Recommendations

- Base the standardisation of dispatch rider training, across the public and private sectors, upon the S4R programme
- Register dispatch riding as a formal qualification on the NSQF
- Develop industry-driven and national occupational standards for dispatch riding
- Accredite the S4R e-learning curriculum with bodies such as the NBTE or the Lagos State Technical and Vocational Education Board, and align assessment mechanisms, RPL, and credit transfer and articulation schemes with it
- Incorporate competency-based S4R training modules in logistics, delivery services and transport vocational training programmes
- Institutionalise the S4R e-learning platform within the licensing process for professional dispatch riders to ensure that regulated competencies are universally taken up



Policy recommendation 2: harness public-private dialogue for the gig economy

Significant growth in the gig economy has brought with it millions of work opportunities globally, not least in Lagos, but also concerns about fair work and good working conditions for people such as dispatch riders, opportunities and incentives for women and youth in this sector, and training standards.

Policies that address these concerns, and so promote the well-being and rights of dispatch riders, are required. Championing such policies are the very stakeholders that partnered to innovate with the S4R programme: the government, the transport and logistics regulator and training authorities representing the public sector; companies representing the private sector (and the gig economy); and GIZ, for the development sector.

Indeed, the Gig Economy Partners Forum has already been established in this regard. Apart from cooperating to create Nigeria's first training curriculum for dispatch riders (for any logistics delivery worker, in fact – see policy recommendation 1 above), and one as innovative as S4R, each member has a stake in the S4R programme and its future. From adding skills and value to Nigerian job-seekers to fulfilling the dual promises of employment and safer roads, S4R is able to satisfy a broad range of needs.

If the S4R programme has proved one thing conclusively, however, it is that cooperation breeds success. The achievements to date and future potential of S4R could not be attained by any one of the parties alone; rather, it is through all of the stakeholders coming together in public-private dialogue that the S4R programme could take shape.

The full implementation – and possible expansion beyond Lagos – of the S4R programme lies ahead, and this will be one of the focuses of the GEPF. Work remains to be done around several matters, such as principles of fair work in the gig economy, the promotion of women dispatch riders, and occupational health and safety, among others, and that requires a conducive policy environment.

In summary, public-private partnership created the S4R programme. That same partnership, perhaps best placed for the task, will ensure its long-term sustainability through articulating and promoting appropriate policy.

Recommendations

These are recommendations for the ongoing S4R public-private dialogue to address:

- Institutionalise public-private dialogue with the aim of creating an association with the development of the gig economy as its goal, and requires statutes to operate properly
- Create standards around fair work for location-based platform work, such as for remuneration and benefits, contractual criteria and definitions, and working conditions
- Promote initiatives to encourage women to train as dispatch riders: awareness-raising, dialogues, advocacy, women-only training, women-focused road-safety training, financial incentives
- Promote occupational safety and customer training for dispatch riders, such as the road safety, labour and employment laws, and customer relations aspects of the S4R e-learning platform



Conclusion

Where it did not before, a standardised, e-learning training platform for Lagosian dispatch riders, as vital exponents of the gig economy of Africa's largest city, now exists.

A training platform that supports and promotes the federal government's policy of driving employment by way of the gig economy. A promising solution to Nigeria's worryingly high unemployment and underemployment rates, especially relating to the youth.

A foundation for Lagos State and Nigeria's legislators, transport and logistics regulators, TVET system, driver training institutions, employment and wealth institutions, private sector employers and labour experts to professionalise dispatch riding and help to create fair, decent work.

For this innovative and most promising platform to continue existing, it needs a conducive and enabling policy environment, an ecosystem to sustain it.

The S4R training programme has been developed in partnership by the private and public sectors. Both are enthusiastic for it to be widely adopted, both in the formal TVET curriculum and within company training and onboarding programmes. Both need forward-looking policymakers to create the ideal environment for this to happen.





Thank you.

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