

ECHOES

FROM

LIFE



PARADIGM
INITIATIVE



About our LIFE Program

Welcome to the Echoes From L.I.F.E Magazine, Paradigm Initiative's annual bulletin highlighting impact stories of both present and past participants of the Life skills, ICTs, Financial literacy, and Entrepreneurship dubbed L.I.F.E. Program. As an integral part of our work to creating a digitally inclusive Africa, the L.I.F.E program equips young Africans living in under-served communities with demand-driven ICT and Entrepreneurship skills and connects them to internships, online work or entrepreneurial ventures with a high possibility of earning immediate and sustainable income.



“The aim of L.I.F.E is to reduce poverty and unemployment among young people in Africa”



From the Program Manager's desk

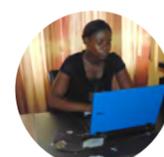


As we continue to connect underserved young Africans to digital opportunities and prepare them to compete for jobs, internships and other productive endeavours that ensures improved livelihoods, our LIFE program, which is a capacity-building initiative that offers ten(10) weeks of training in ICTs, Entrepreneurship, Life Skills and Financial Readiness to youth living in under-served communities and lacking access to tertiary education due to poverty is still dedicated to bridging the digital gap.

Unemployment is 33.3% in Nigeria and it is worse for youth (42%), women (35.2%) and in rural areas (34.5%). It is a similar story in many other African countries where the youth bulge continues to grow but jobs remain a major challenge. Paradigm Initiative's LIFE program addresses this problem through the provision of digital literacy and entrepreneurship skills for underserved youth because the absence of these skills denies youth the opportunity to thrive in the digital space and increases the number of unemployed youth, especially in the marginalized population -- youth, women and underserved communities.

Through the LIFE program, over 4500 young men and women have benefited directly and indirectly from the project. In 13 years and now with a team of 12, we grew the LIFE program from an infrequent training at a leased cybercafe to a program running in 3 well-equipped centres and 17 schools, and now in a second country. Also, currently working with over 5 organizations to expand the program's operations beyond current communities and regions to increase reach and impact.

Our follow up mechanism allows us to keep in touch with our beneficiaries and be part of their journey from time to time. Through our program, Fatimah Saleh Abdulkarim, an 18-year-old resident of Kano in northern Nigeria, who lost her father as a toddler, got opportunities typically reserved for boys in her conservative community. Fatimah thought digital skills were for boys but now runs her family's confectionery business, using the knowledge of social media picked up from our training to promote the business. There are more Fatimahs out here and we want to tell their story of breaking glass ceilings.



Tosin Abolaji
Program Manager



The current COVID-19 pandemic, which has restricted a lot of activities from fully happening as planned, has been a barrier to implementing our digital inclusion programs but we are addressing that by introducing a virtual learning approach to our training and workshops. Our training and workshops are now designed to accommodate a blended (face-to-face classroom sessions and online learning) learning approach, where all participants do not have to be in a classroom for learning but they have the privilege to learn in the comfort of their homes. There is also the challenge of learning devices but the project is working on making provision to ensure that every participant has access to mobile devices for learning throughout the project year.

The last 12 months have been challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic but we have been innovative and proactive. We had to work remotely as our training activities were completed virtually to continue serving our communities. Given our ability to adapt at a difficult time, other organizations interested in collaborating with us helped expand the program's reach while meeting their own objectives. The past year gave us the opportunity to see how much more vulnerable marginalized groups become without access to the Internet and digital devices, and further demonstrated the need for digital inclusion. This is why we are very keen to increase the reach of our program and target some of the most affected groups by extending the LIFE program to other countries and collaborating with other organizations who have found our model useful to reach their existing communities of focus.

From 2020, we approached organizations that work in youth development and digital inclusion to collaborate and adopt our training models to improve their impact. The idea was to collaborate with training organizations struggling to improve their processes. We organized webinars and shared our experience, impact stories, lessons learnt along the way and our future plans. 12 organizations showed interest in working with us after learning from our 13 years' experience working with youth and underserved communities, and 6 have signed up.

Our LIFE program activities are currently implemented in Ogun state, in partnership with Mentor an African Child (MACI), in River state, in partnership with Youth and Women Empowerment Centre (YOWEC), in Balyelsa state, in partnership with SureAid Development Initiative, in Kebbi state, in partnership with Kebbi StartUp, and in Gombe state, in partnership with Organisation of women in Science in the developing world (OWSD).



The Digital Inclusion Team



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"ICT has helped me realize how to maximize the digital space in building a sustainable brand for myself and to run my businesses and initiatives."

Raphael Ikuyinminu

My elder brother was the definition of the impact of the LIFE Program. I see him come home every day after each class as a better person. He got a new carriage and was very confident. Also, the skills from the training landed him his first employment opportunity.

Before joining the LIFE program, Raphael was just a regular kid who just graduated from secondary school, trying to carve a niche for himself and to clarify what he wants to be known for. He was also learning how to repair mobile phones. "My experience at the training helped me gain clarity," he said.



Attending the LIFE program, my mind was rewired to see problems as opportunities and I learned how to create value from them. The four elements (Life skills, ICT, Financial readiness and Entrepreneurship) taught at the training have built for me a good foundation. Also, ICT has helped me realize how to maximize the digital space in building a sustainable brand for myself and to run my businesses and initiatives, said Raphael.

Currently, Raphael is a student of Human Resource Management at the University of Lagos, he also manages the "Preach A Child initiative" - a child's right initiative created to give voice to children.

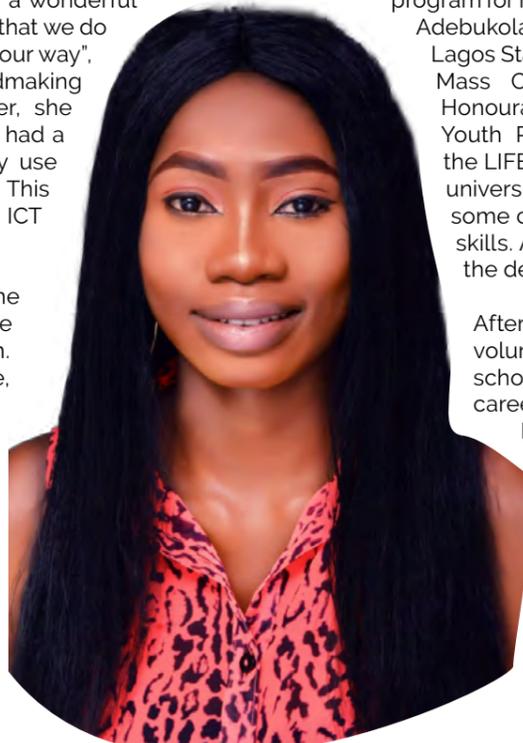


"I must confess the training made me a better person than I was before joining because I was equipped with the necessary digital skills needed to soar in the 21st century. The most outstanding moment at the program for me was designing my own website."

Adebukola Zoffun

Adebukola knew about the program through social media. "I was surprised that such a wonderful opportunity exists in a ghetto; not that we do not deserve it, but it hardly comes our way", she said. Adebukola learnt beadmaking after secondary school. However, she felt the need to be ICT inclined. I had a laptop at home but could barely use the applications installed on it. This created in me the push to learn ICT skills.

"I was happy when I got the notification of selection to be a part of the LIFE program. At the AjegunleLIFE centre, I learnt graphics design, web development, entrepreneurship, and life coping skills. I must confess the training made me a better person than I was before joining because I was equipped with the necessary digital skills needed to soar in the



21st century. The most outstanding moment at the program for me was designing my own website."

Adebukola is presently a 100L student of Lagos State University where she's studying Mass Communication. She is also an Honourable member of the Lagos State Youth Parliament. "The knowledge from the LIFE program has helped me a lot as a university student; I do not need to pay for some certain services because I have the skills. And I have made some money with the designing skills."

After the LIFE program, Adebukola volunteered to speak at secondary schools to students on "choice of career" as part of her commitment as an Honourable member of the Lagos State Youth Parliament.

I dream of a future where young people in slums like Ajegunle are not only digitally connected but possess digital skills to improve their lives.



"The training exceeded my expectations. I started the program with little knowledge on how to use a computer and I graduated as an expert in using a computer."

Anita Atulobi

"The training exceeded my expectations. I started the program with little knowledge on how to use a computer and I graduated as an expert in using a computer." These were the words of 20-year-old Anita Atulobi after graduating from Paradigm Initiative's LIFE Program.

Before the training, Anita was a primary school teacher whose income could not sustain her monthly expenses. While working as a teacher she yearned to learn new skills that will help her get a better job in order to improve her finances.

In 2018, Anita joined the Digital Inclusion program having seen the impact of the training on her twin sister who attended the program in 2017. Her most outstanding moment at

the training was coming first during the PowerPoint presentation, and her website was chosen among the top 3 best during the individual website project presentation.

After the program, Anita volunteered her time to teach at the LIFE & LIFE@school program, she also trains other community young girls on how to use the computer at the Women's Tech Empowerment Center.

"The ICT training I received at the program helped me secure a coding instructor job. Presently I work as a coding instructor in a school through WTEC (Women's Technology Empowerment Centre). Also, my financial status has increased, as I earn more now, compared to what I was earning as a primary school teacher before the LIFE program", said Anita.





"I must confess the training made me a better person than I was before joining because I was equipped with the necessary digital skills needed to soar in the 21st century. The most outstanding moment at the program for me was designing my own website."

Benita Atulobi

Before participating in the LIFE program in 2017, Benita Atulobi was just a secondary school graduate who was doing nothing. "I had this self-absorbed attitude and I procrastinate a lot. I needed to learn a skill, but I didn't know how to go about it. Thanks to a friend who introduced me to the LIFE program", she said.

According to Benita, "My aim of joining the program was to learn new skills and get opportunities to implement them. So, I was excited when I got selected into the training".

She said the most exciting moments for her at the program was being able to design a website, create a logo and write business plans. These are things



she never imagined she would be able to do.

After the LIFE program, she started utilizing her new skill, and impacting other young people and children positively. "My greatest achievement is getting the opportunity to impact the skills I learnt on various occasions as a Volunteer facilitator for digital inclusion programs, like: paradigm initiative's program (LIFE@school and Digital Readiness workshop for girls), Women's Technology Empowerment Centre C.D.C (children's developmental center) program and WTEC'S she creates camp", she said.

Presently Benita, works as a computer instructor for W.TEC (women technology empowerment centre).



"My life right now is a complete after-effect of the training. I can proudly say that I am a literate of nine programming languages (HTML, CSS, JavaScript, PHP, SQL, Python, Java, Dart and Arduino) and three graphic design software's (Adobe Photoshop, Corel Draw and Inkscape)."

Oritsemian Favor Enemigin

Seventeen years old Oritsemisan worked as a teacher with some schools and tutorial centres before his contact with the LIFE program. Although he had a little knowledge of how to use a computer, the fact that he could improve his ICT skills at the AjegunleLIFE centre for free stirred his interest to join the program.

Before the program, Misan's biggest challenge was his inability to successfully deliver any entrepreneurial skill - He'd tried using the little knowledge he had on graphics design to establish a startup called "Myme Edits", but it wasn't successful. "I ask myself 'If you quit your teaching job, what would you do?'. Well, the LIFE program gave me an answer - You would be a programmer", said Misan.

During the training, He learnt more than just ICT and Entrepreneur. Misan learnt how to actively participate in teams, and how to network. The frequent individual

presentations made him bold on how to speak to an audience. He learnt positive character traits from the daily morning life skill sessions.

"My life right now is a complete after-effect of the training. I can proudly say that I am a literate of nine programming languages (HTML, CSS, JavaScript, PHP, SQL, Python, Java, Dart and Arduino) and three graphic design software's (Adobe Photoshop, Corel Draw and Inkscape). I have taught secondary school students, 'Jambites' and even Computer Science Students how to code and this is only as a result of the knowledge I got at the training."

After the program, Misan worked as a Lead Front End Developer at DrinkWater_Tech - an IT Company he founded alongside two of his mates that also attended the LIFE program. He is also a graphic designer and a Java student at the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT). He also worked as an intern at DHL for six months.





"My life is looking sharp, I see myself ahead of most of my peers within my community because they have no knowledge of the things I know."

Whitney Tony

Whitney Tony is a 22-year-old girl, the last child of the family of five. According to her, growing up in Ajegunle was a tough one because of the notorious lifestyle of many young people within the slum.

After her graduation from secondary school in 2015, Whitney joined the rat race in order to support her family financially. However, almost all of her salary could only cover transportation and feeding. This she did for 4 years after her graduation.

In 2019 she heard about the LIFE program for a friend, Moses Oghene, a graduate of the program. Whitney knew she had to benefit from the LIFE experience in order to gain the right skills if she wants to pursue new opportunities.

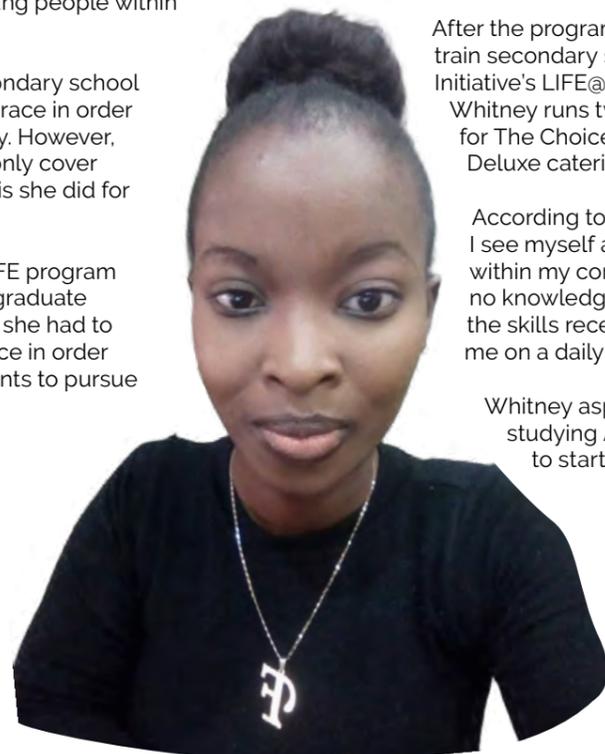
At the AjegunleLIFE training centre, "I equipped myself with digital skills, the

facilitators encouraged us to push hard, my eyes were opened to lots of opportunities and I learned how to set realistic goals", said Whitney.

After the program, Whitney volunteered to train secondary school students at Paradigm Initiative's LIFE@School Program. Presently, Whitney runs two jobs as a digital marketer for The Choice Sanitary Wares LTD and Deluxe catering and event school.

According to her, "my life is looking sharp, I see myself ahead of most of my peers within my community because they have no knowledge of the things I know. Also, the skills received at the LIFE program help me on a daily basis with my current job."

Whitney aspires to further her education studying Accountancy, she also plans to start a catering business.



"ICT has helped connect me to the world of fashion which I plan to embark on; I now know more information about fashion as a business. I also plan on starting an online agricultural store to stimulate the sale of agro produce in Nigeria."

Owosekun Olatubosun

Before the LIFE Program, Olatubosun was afraid of being a failure in life, he saw many limitations to his success, one of which was gaining admission to study the course of his choice in the university. "This thought weighs me down a lot", he said. Olatubosun wants to be a Business Manager, this desire was stirred in him while managing his mum poultry farm, this keeps him engaged while waiting to gain admission.

Getting to know about the LIFE program from his neighbour in 2018 was a blessing in disguise because he had always wanted to get knowledge in ICT. "The training opportunity brought a paradigm shift to my life and it brings joy to me whenever I remember the experience. I was inspired during the program that I can be successful. I have gained so much courage to take some bold steps in my life."

The most amazing thing about the program is knowing that there are people who volunteer to uplift Nigerian youths without looking at their

background, tribe or money. Also seeing under 25's owning successful businesses was amazing, he said.

Through the LIFE program, Olatubosun got an internship opportunity with Gina Consulting, a UK-based firm. He worked to manage the Dress For Success project - a project that empowers women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.

In 2019, Olatubosun gained admission to study Business Management at the University of Nigeria, Enugu. He is also taking fashion design training.

"Having knowledge of ICT has been helpful; academically, I am able to do online research in getting resources for my assignment and my research work. Business-wise, ICT has helped connect me to the world of fashion which I plan to embark on; I now know more information about fashion as a business. I also plan on starting an online agricultural store to stimulate the sale of agro produce in Nigeria."





"During the program, I learnt about time management, how to dress nicely, advertise my business on social media, how to use Corel draw to make new clothing designs, and how to use Microsoft office packages."

Gideon Awanife

Meet Gideon Awanife, a graduate of the LIFE program. Gideon describes himself as "a low-class fashion designer with no computer skills." Before the program he sewed local fabrics and shirts only. After graduating from the program, Gideon realized that he was only at his starting point and could improve his business and life.

Gideon was attracted to join the program because his friend told him that he would be more enlightened about running a profitable business.

"During the program, I learnt about time management, how to dress nicely, advertise my business on social media, how



to use Corel draw to make new clothing designs, and how to use Microsoft office packages. Also, during the program, I realized how backward I had been. The program motivated me to acquire new skills like; suit making, customizations, and sewing ready-made wears", said Gideon.

Gideon describes the post-training engagement by the AjegunleLIFE staff as excellent - "They keep checking up on me to ensure that I am pursuing my dreams, this for me is amazing".

Presently, Gideon has taken the big bold step to set up a fashion house "Gidstyles", He is now able to sketch his designs and bring his creativity to life. He also plans to run a global clothing company.



"I taught over 2000 people how to code from children to secondary school teachers in most districts in Lagos state Nigeria, during the CodeLagos and Google CSFirst programs. Best part is seeing people achieving great things with skills I taught them."

Moses Oghene

Moses Oghene describes himself as a curious personality who enjoys figuring out the building blocks of the world, and rearranging them to build something even better, especially using technology.

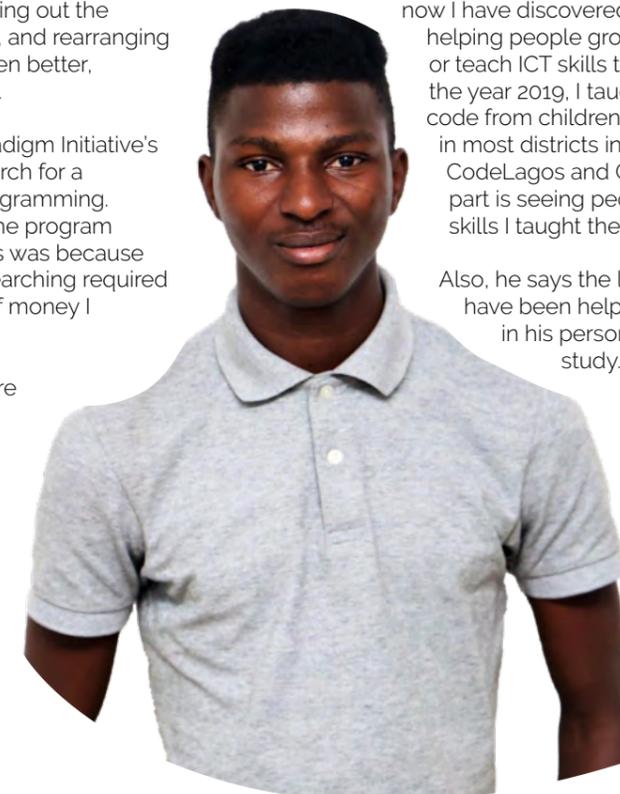
Moses found out about Paradigm Initiative's LIFE program during his search for a place to learn computer programming. "What attracted me to join the program was because it was free, this was because others I found while I was searching required me to pay a huge amount of money I couldn't afford", he said.

Speaking about his life before and after the program, he says "my life Before the LIFE program was either, sitting at home, visiting a friend, or in church playing piano. My biggest

challenge was not knowing what to do with my life. But now I have discovered how much I enjoy teaching and helping people grow. Yes, I love to help people, or teach ICT skills to people. In the last quarter of the year 2019, I taught over 2000 persons how to code from children to secondary school teachers in most districts in Lagos state Nigeria, during the CodeLagos and Google CSFirst programs. Best part is seeing people achieving great things with skills I taught them".

Also, he says the lessons from the life program have been helpful. The lessons have helped him in his personal life, work life, and academic study.

Presently, he is a computer programming instructor and is studying computer science and software engineering(part-time).





“At first I thought I was only going to learn ICT skills, but it got even better, as I realized that entrepreneurship and life skill training were also part of the LIFE training package.”

Peace Ikwuje

Peace Ikwuje's first encounter with Paradigm Initiative, was in the year 2018, when her secondary school participated in a two-day Digital Readiness Workshop for Girls, at Paradigm Initiative's LIFE training center. When she graduated from secondary school in the year 2019, she applied and participated in the LIFE program.

According to peace, she said the girls workshop experience motivated her to apply to the LIFE program, also she wanted to learn a skill before getting into the university and she saw the LIFE program as a rare opportunity, which has no financial cost attached to it.

While speaking on her LIFE program experience, she said, "at first I thought I was only going to learn ICT skills, but it got even better, as I realized that entrepreneurship and life skill training were also part of the LIFE training package. The LIFE training broadened my knowledge in different aspects of both the ICT world and the business world. I was able to learn how the internet really works and how to make



judicious use of it. I am not a shy person, but I still had stage fright and I got rid of it during the training, as we made lots of presentations during the training, and this helped boost my self confidence."

Peace Ikwuje now volunteers for the Paradigm Initiative's LIFE@School program. A program that takes the LIFE training to secondary schools in underserved communities. She works as a secretary in a school, and she is also a freelance web designer.

On the impact of the LIFE program in her life, she said, "I got the job I have now because of my IT skills, and I have been able to maintain the job with the LIFE skills I learnt. I am proud of the fact that the Paradigm Initiative gave me the opportunity to teach what I have learnt to other students in secondary schools. I first learnt programming from the training, and it has helped me know the basics of the programming languages which I use for my freelancing work. I have also trained some undergraduates on web design. Even though at the moment, I do not have a university degree, I am still able to work and earn money."



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"The skills I garnered at the LIFE training played a major role in helping me adapt to my new role effortlessly."

Ann Ogudoro

Ann Ogudoro came in contact with AbaLIFE Digital Inclusion Centre in November 2017 during her junior brother's graduation from the centre. She stood in for her parents during the AbaLIFE Town Hall Meeting and graduation that year.

Ann disclosed the changes the (family) observed in her brother immediately after he started training at the centre. In December the same year, Ann started visiting the centre so that she could be trained also.

In January 2018, she applied and was selected to participate in the 2018 Batch A. She was outstanding during the training. Ann gave equal attention to all the modules taught during the period ranging from Life Skills, ICT, Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship. It was not surprising that Ann got a job (in a missionary school) immediately after she graduated from our Digital Inclusion training.

With the skills acquired, Ann became the Administrative Assistant. Shortly after her resumption, she was assigned

to update the school website and upload students' results online. She did this with little supervision by the web administrator. Subsequently, she became perfect at handling the website. Hence, that became her routine task in the office. According to her, the skills she garnered at the LIFE training played a major role in helping her adapt to her new role at her workplace effortlessly.

Considering her family background, Ann knew that she had to work to raise and save money for her tertiary education. The training provided her with the skills that helped her to achieve that goal of raising money for her tertiary education. Ann enrolled herself for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, sat for the exam and passed with a high grade and secured admission into the university on merit to study Psychology (her dream course).



"I'm so grateful to Paradigm Initiative as the Coronavirus pandemic made me see the value of the skills we were given at the LIFE training as I was part of those that were earning money in the midst of the pandemic with the help of my digital skills."

Chiwengozi Ezekiel

Chiwengozi was pulled out from his secondary school and was enrolled in what his parents thought was a computer school when he expressed his passion to learn the use of computers to his parents. Shortly after his enrollment in the school, he discovered that the computer school is just a name as there were no functional computers in the school, hence, the students only learn theoretical aspects of computing. He was so disappointed seeing that his dream of learning how to use computers was turning to look like it was an impossible mission. It was at this point that he met an old friend who introduced him to Paradigm Initiative's Digital Inclusion program. He struggled to believe that the program is free of charge since a teacher in his secondary school had told him that a good computer training program will cost a lot of money.

Chiwengozi visited Paradigm Initiative's South-East training centre in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria in 2018 to confirm what his friend told him and eventually picked the enrollment form.

During his interview, Chiwengozi's sincere responses to interview questions, the passion and seriousness we saw in him made us select him to participate in the 2018 batch B of our Digital Inclusion program.

Because of the distance of our training centre from his home, he had to engage in part-time menial jobs in the first few weeks of the training to enable him to buy a bicycle for coming to training. Throughout the training, he was punctual and dedicated. To ensure he sits at the front seat, Chiwengozi made sure he came in early.

We observed his interest in web development and encouraged him to tow in that line. The digital skills he acquired made him to be selected for a Netpreneurship fellowship program in Aba.

Chiwengozi completed his fellowship program early in 2019 and is now making money developing websites and blogs for his customers.

In his spare time, he volunteers to teach web development, WordPress and blogging in our South-East Digital Inclusion Centre, Nigeria.

In his words, "I'm so grateful to Paradigm Initiative as the Coronavirus pandemic made me see the value of the skills we were given at the LIFE training as I was part of those that were earning money in the midst of the pandemic with the help of my digital skills."





"The training is an eye-opener to me in ICT, life, industry and entrepreneurship. It helped me to discover the opportunities surrounding me and how to make effective use of them. This made me realize that being an entrepreneur is not just owning a business but the ability to find problems and provide solutions to them."

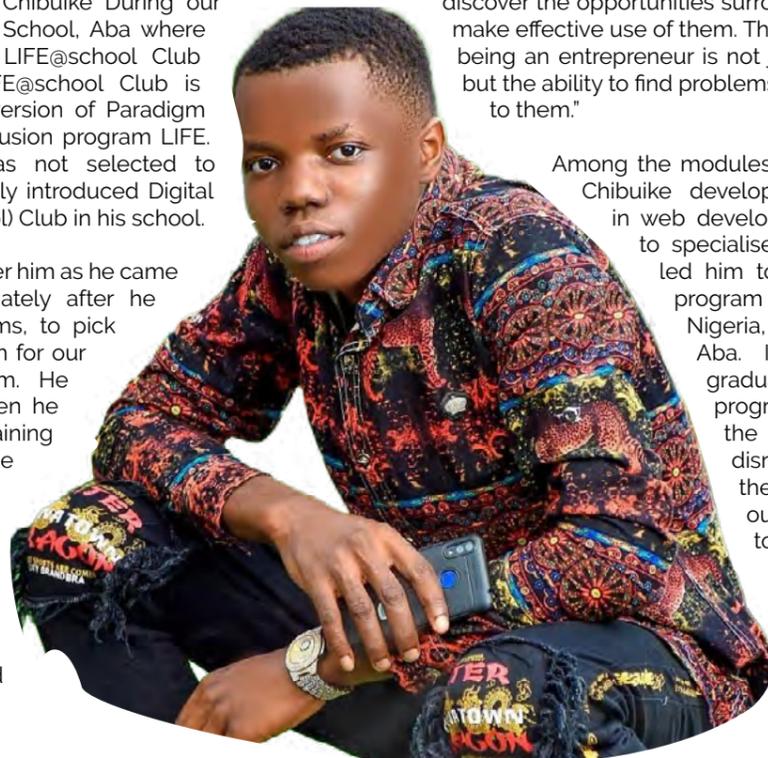
Enechukwu Chibuke

"Graduating from secondary school, I was gripped with fear because I did not know what else to do with my life. Learning Computer Science (theoretically) in secondary, I developed an interest in tech, but each time I think of my family background, I get discouraged."

We met Enechukwu Chibuike During our visit to National High School, Aba where we went to start a LIFE@school Club training program. LIFE@school Club is a secondary school version of Paradigm Initiatives's Digital Inclusion program LIFE. Unfortunately, he was not selected to participate in the newly introduced Digital Inclusion (LIFE@School) Club in his school.

The above did not deter him as he came to the office immediately after he finished his final exams, to pick up the enrolment form for our LIFE training program. He was full of doubt when he was told that the training is free of charge. He reluctantly applied for the second batch of 2019. He was interviewed and was selected.

During 10 weeks of training he immersed



himself in the training as he was one of the most dedicated in his batch and that made him to graduate as one the best in our 2019B batch of training.

In his own words, "The training is an eye-opener to me in ICT, life, industry and entrepreneurship. It helped me to discover the opportunities surrounding me and how to make effective use of them. This made me realize that being an entrepreneur is not just owning a business but the ability to find problems and provide solutions to them."

Among the modules taught in the training, Chibuike developed a strong interest in web development, and the desire to specialise in web development led him to joining an internship program with LearnFactory Nigeria, a tech hub in Aba. Immediately after he graduated from our training program. Even when the Covid-19 Pandemic disrupted his internship the skills he learned at our training helped him to continue his training online

Chibuike is now a full stack developer.



"Immediately I left the training, I got a better job than the one I left to sign up for the training and it was my newly acquired computer skills that made it possible."

Ihionu Christian Cynthia

I was on the verge of losing my job because I didn't have computer skills but then I came in contact with a friend who passed through PIN's LIFE training in Aba. What he told me about the training and the organisation sounded too good to be true. I was also skeptical because of my previous experience with organisations promising much in training and delivering less but at the end of the day I decided to give it a trial and I will say that what I saw from the office reception and how conducive the environment was made me believe that it was the place for me.

During the training, everything was happening beyond my expectations. The quality of facilitators that handled the classes were top notch. The things being taught were things I have been longing to learn. The level of discipline being applied was also commendable. From the ICT classes to the entrepreneurship classes and the Life Skills class everything was like they had me in mind while developing those modules and I made up my mind to apply myself to all that we were being taught and by the time we were through with the training, a new me had emerged. The recommended reading during the training helped me to get my reading groove back as I started using more of my time to read than other trivial activities I used to be involved in before the training to the admiration of my family and friends

who noticed that change in me.

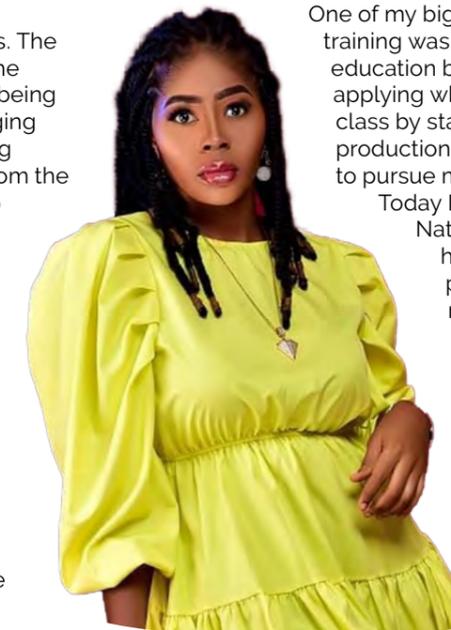
Another thing the training did for me was that it helped me to rediscover myself and I started seeing myself from a point of view I never imagined. I was able to set a plan of things I was going to do to achieve with the newly acquired knowledge and skills then.

Immediately I left the training, I got a better job than the one I left to sign up for the training and it was my newly acquired computer skills that made it possible.

One of my biggest challenges before joining the training was how I was going to fund my tertiary education but upon leaving the training I started applying what we learned in the entrepreneurship class by starting a small home cleaning agents production business which helped me to raise my to pursue my education.

Today I have completed my Ordinary National Diploma program, my business has expanded to include perfume production and I have formally registered the business.

All these would not have been possible without the foundation that LIFE training laid for me and I'm grateful to PIN for this wonderful opportunity. I have been helping other young people in the LIFE program so that they will benefit from what I have enjoyed earlier.





"During the training, it appeared that all the modules were designed just for me. The life skill training exposed me to my hidden potential. I became more interested in writing. I started making money on the internet using WordPress and other social media platforms, today I write on opera hub and earn money monthly."

Ikeh Loveth Onyinyechi

After my secondary school education, I could see clearly that the only way to survive while in university was to learn a skill. The challenge then was what marketable skill I can learn so that I could combine work with school

In December 2017, my friend told me about Paradigm Initiative's AbaLIFE Digital Inclusion Centre. I hesitated to pick the form because I was wondering what I am going to learn there. My thought about 'skill' is something one can do with his/her hand physically. I got more insight into the importance of Digital skills in the new economy from the Program Assistant (AbaLIFE Digital Inclusion Centre).

Listening to him, I was assured of improved livelihood. January 2018, I picked the form and was selected for the first batch of the year.

At first, I thought that the centre was just a place to learn how to use a computer. After my first week in the centre, I discovered that it is a 'life-changing centre'!

I spent 10 weeks on the training, learning various employable skills ranging from Life skills, ICT, Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship.

During the training, it appeared that all the modules were designed just for me. The life skill training exposed



me to my hidden potential. I became more interested in writing. I started making money on the internet using WordPress and other social media platforms, today I write on opera hub and earn money monthly.

Immediately after I completed the training, I started job hunting with a CV I prepared by myself with the help of what we were taught in the training. I applied for a Technical/Office Assistant job at Save A Life Mission Hospital. I went for the interview well prepared. Among the multitude of persons that were interviewed, I was selected for the job and I know that my digital skills were part of what made that possible.

Though I worked with computers and Microsoft Office Productivity Tools in Save A Life Mission Hospital, I was not satisfied with the work. I needed a job that would allow me to practice my internet skills.

I found a company – Akpoaza, an online logistics company. I sent in my CV for the position of a Digital Marketer. The company called me to resume work immediately.

I'm also involved with voluntary work with She Leads Africa partners, a community that helps young African women achieve their professional dream.

In 2019, I registered for an online class where I started formal script writing. I am glad that I can carry my shoulders high as an upcoming big screenwriter!



"Ogochukwu did not disappoint the mum or the organisation that trained her for free as she got a job after the training with the help of the skills she got from the training and was able to save from her earnings."

Obi Ogochukwu Joy

Ogochukwu was a beneficiary in the 2017C session of our training which she joined almost at the point of closing the sale of forms but was brought to the office by the mum who pleaded for her to be accepted into the training.

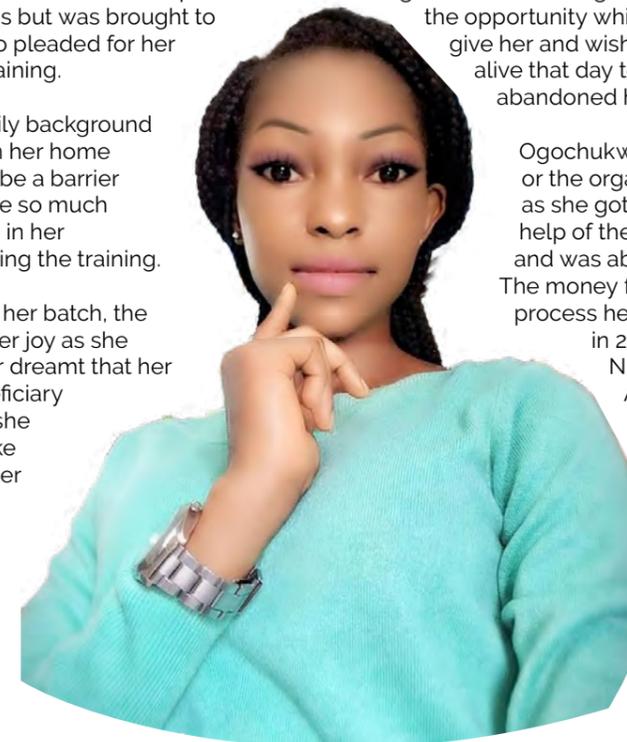
She did not allow her family background and the distance between her home and our training centre to be a barrier to her getting the skills she so much desired and this was seen in her dedication to learning during the training.

On the graduation day for her batch, the mother couldn't contain her joy as she testified on how she never dreamt that her daughter could be a beneficiary of a program like ours as she has been struggling to take care of Ogochukwu and her 2 other sisters since they were abandoned by their father because they are girls as he didn't believe

that they will amount to anything. She expressed her gratitude to Paradigm Initiative for giving her daughter the opportunity which her biological father couldn't give her and wished that the late husband was alive that day to see what the daughter he abandoned has become.

Ogochukwu did not disappoint the mum or the organisation that trained her for free as she got a job after the training with the help of the skills she got from the training and was able to save from her earnings. The money from her savings helped her to process her admission into the university in 2019 to study Accountancy at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Currently, Ogochukwu is in her third year at the university. Not relenting, she works (part-time) while schooling.





"Our world is in an era where everything is now digitally skilled, either get on-board or be left behind."

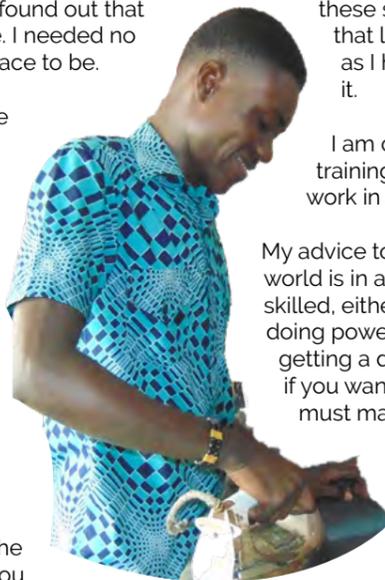
Obioma Chikanma Kelechi

After finishing secondary school, I joined my father who is a fashion designer in the city of aba. I spent four (4) months with my dad but I was so unserious with my affairs in the office. My father and I knew that I needed training. One day, a friend of mine told me about this training but I didn't pay attention to him. Two weeks later, my dad was listening to Magic FM (a radio station in Aba) and heard the advert. He informed me about it and emphasized the need for having digital skills. I went down to the office and picked a form.

I knew I needed digital skills but was afraid of paying too much to any computer centre and getting less value. So, I researched Paradigm Initiative and found out that the value offered was so good to be free. I needed no prophet to tell me that this is the right place to be.

During the eight (8) weeks of training, the only challenge I had was not having a computer system at home that I could use to practice what I was taught. This made me not be as good as I wanted.

However, before the training, I had a fear of technology. I thought the Internet was a no go area. Although I was using a smartphone, I never knew that all of the Apps I was using were connected to the internet. The notion I had about the concept is "the internet is meant for computer science students since I'm not one, I don't need it". But all that changed after the training. Also, I thought business was meant for the elderly and before going into business you should have a lot of money at your expense.



Most importantly, I thought business was just about making money and going your way.

My learning was easy and fun. The Life skill classes got the best out of me. I enjoyed the lectures because it was more practical than theory; this made my learning easy and fun.

Moreover, having the knowledge of ICT is making me take opportunities online that will better my life. Currently, I am doing some online courses since I am yet to get into the university. I am now able to push my dreams and products to the world with the help of these skills. In my family, everyone now knows that life can be easy with the help of technology as I have introduced everyone in my house to it.

I am currently into fashion design and I also run training for secondary schools and I do volunteer work in AbaLIFE in the entrepreneurship classes.

My advice to every young person out there is this "Our world is in an era where everything is now digitally skilled, either get on-board or be left behind. Stop doing power and might, embrace an easy life by getting a digital skill today. If you want to be relevant, if you want to make money and be respected, you must make up your mind to solve a problem. The world is bowing for entrepreneurs, get a skill and set your greatness in motion today. There is no free cash anywhere in the world. You have to roll up your sleeves and till the ground, for it to produce for you."



'Now, I am a writer like I've always wanted. I also manage my personal blog with an active Facebook page. People ask me occasionally to write a few things for them for small amounts of money and I have been published by reputable magazines in the country.'

Ottih Onyedikachi

My name is Ottih Onyedikachi. Before Paradigm Initiative, I was the typical computer illiterate who has never booted a computer. After secondary school, my parents felt it was not necessary to allow me to go for computer lessons which were what most school leavers were doing. This was because they didn't see the importance and because they would find it difficult to give me the fee charged by the training centres. My sister heard about the program and talked to me about registering. I was home doing chores day in and day out.

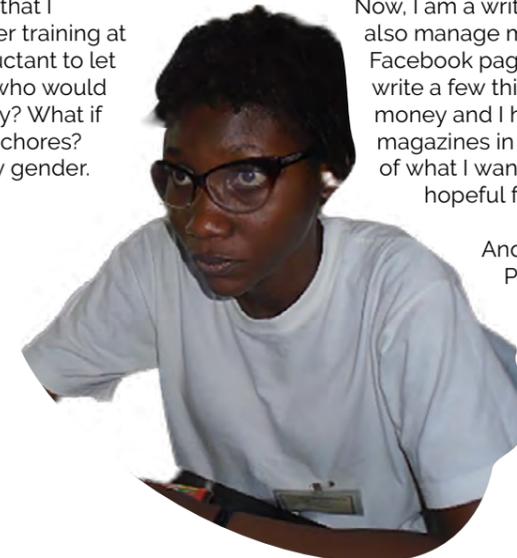
When I mentioned to my parents that I wanted to go register for computer training at Paradigm Initiative, they were reluctant to let me go for the following reasons: who would train people for free in this country? What if they are fake? Who would do the chores? And they are overprotective of my gender. My sister went ahead without my consent because I was timid and fearful to purchase the form for me. At that juncture, my parents had no choice but to let me go. During the program, I realized that many aspects of my life were empty and wanting. I had

no direction, no sense of purpose, I had no ounce of what it meant to manage myself and I was thrilled at having to learn the things I now know for the first time. After the program, I was a more courageous person, more decisive, I typed a project work before the end of the training for five days and I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life.

Like some people, I felt it was a scam to be trained for ten weeks with no penny spent. I was skeptical as I walked into the office that morning praying not to be walking into ritualists' den where I'd be beheaded.

Now, I am a writer like I've always wanted. I also manage my personal blog with an active Facebook page. People ask me occasionally to write a few things for them for small amounts of money and I have been published by reputable magazines in the country. With my precise view of what I want to be and where I want to be, I am hopeful for the life I am currently living.

And my sincerest gratitude to Paradigm Initiative, the programs officer at AbaLife for holding my hands while I walked through this journey. Thank you.





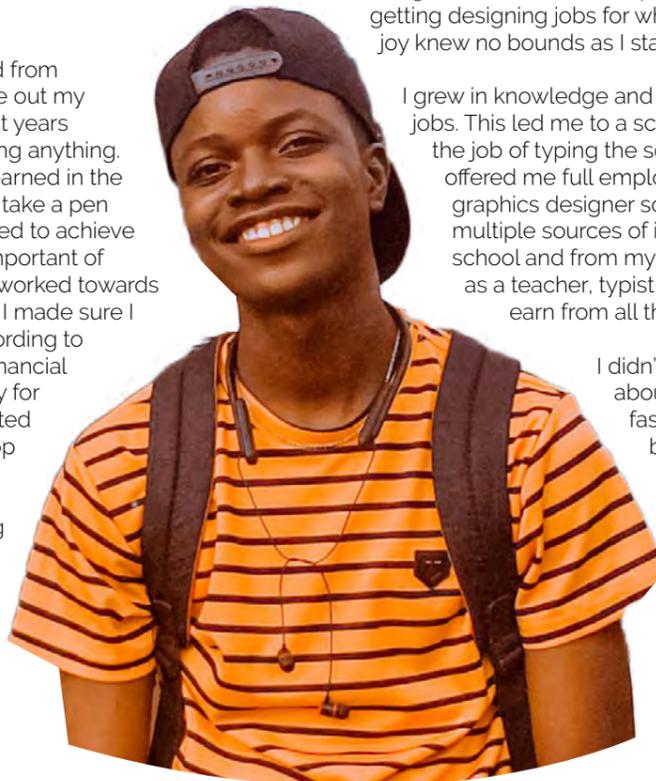
"I made sure I saved every penny I had according to what we were taught in the financial readiness classes. Fortunately for me, I saved more than expected and I got myself a DELL laptop which helped me to join an internship program where I honed my graphics designing and coding skills more."

Raphael Emmanuel David

Our training means different things to each of our beneficiaries. To Raphael Emmanuel, the impact of the training on him came as a combination of what he learned from the ICT, Life Skills and financial readiness classes.

In his words "After I graduated from paradigm, I took time to figure out my future. I went through the past years which I spent without achieving anything. I went back to the thing we learned in the training that motivated me to take a pen and write down things I needed to achieve in 3 months time, the most important of which was getting a laptop. I worked towards it without being discouraged. I made sure I saved every penny I had according to what we were taught in the financial readiness classes. Fortunately for me, I saved more than expected and I got myself a DELL laptop which helped me to join an internship program where I honed my graphics designing and coding skills more.

Unlike other days when I would wake up to do house chores and Zoom



off to play football, I started managing my time well which made me have less time to play and more time to study now. I joined groups on social media like graphic designers and web development groups and started getting designing jobs for which I was paid for and my joy knew no bounds as I started earning.

I grew in knowledge and I started scouting for jobs. This led me to a school who after giving me the job of typing the school examination paper offered me full employment as a teacher/school graphics designer so now I can say that I have multiple sources of income as I earn from the school and from my freelance jobs. Today I work as a teacher, typist and graphic designer and earn from all these sources.

I didn't know that everything about my life would change this fast before I joined the training but now I can see myself living a life I thought could only be possible in a dream.

Thanks to the Paradigm Initiative.



"My social and communication skills were not left out as I have moved from the timid girl that I used to be to a bold person that can address any gathering comfortably now."

Roselyn Ifeoma Micheal

I got to hear about the training through a friend who graduated from the training earlier. The changes I saw in her were the main reasons that motivated me to join the training. I had my fears as I have not touched a computer before but she assured me that it wouldn't be a problem as the way they teach the modules will make it easier for me to learn. Based on her encouragement I picked the form and passed through the selection process and was among the selected few.

During the training, I will see myself shaking when I want to handle the mouse or do other things on the computer but I thank God that trainers and officers of the centre were so understanding and they helped me overcome my phobia and boosting my morale to settle down and learn in the training.

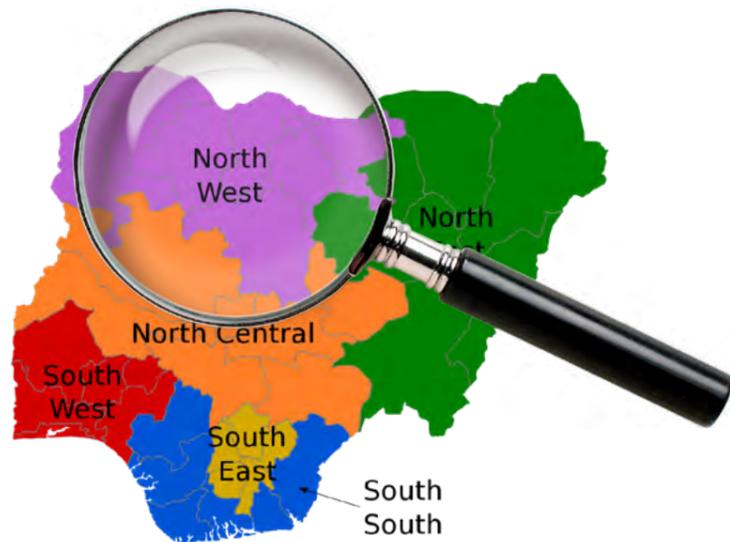
The training impacted me in so many ways as before the



training I see the digital skill as something meant for extraordinarily intelligent people and not for commoners like me based on my background and where I was coming from but all those perceptions were changed in the course of the training as I see myself doing things I couldn't imagine doing before joining the training. This was not only in the area of digital skills alone, even the entrepreneurship skills classes exposed me to things I didn't know about. Like generating an idea that can change my environment. My social and communication skills were not left out as I have moved from the timid girl that I used to be to a bold person that can address any gathering comfortably now.

I'm so grateful that the skills I acquired from this training have set me on the path of progress since I left the training. I will proudly say that with the help of the skills I got I now work as a secretary in a law chamber and the salary has helped me in contributing to the upkeep of my house making my family more proud of me.

I look forward to saving money to help my parents in funding my tertiary education.



North West, Nigeria

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"After the program, I learnt how to sew and using the knowledge from my training, I now own my own tailoring business at Dakata thanks to Paradigm Initiative."

Abdurrahman Isah Sauna

I am Abdurrahman Isah Sauna from Kano. I graduated from secondary school in 2015 but I could not further my education because my parents could not afford it. I was idling away at home till some of my friends told me about a training centre

at Dakata called DakataLIFE. I joined the program after a month and since then my life has changed for the better. After the program, I learnt how to sew and using the knowledge from my training, I now own my own tailoring business at Dakata thanks to Paradigm Initiative.





"I am growing in the business of bag making, as customers are trooping in. With the support and motivation from the LIFE Program and the trainers, I am not where I used to be and I am grateful for that."

Fatima Ahmed Sekure

I Am Fatima Ahmed Sekure, from Badawa layout, Kano. My Brother told me about Paradigm Initiative's Training after my NYSC in 2019. Since he is an alumnus, he told me how they support youths to achieve their goals, learn ICT skills and become entrepreneurs, so I asked him to let me know when it was time to enroll.

What I heard about the program made me more interested in being a part of it. I heard it helped youths learn how to be self-reliant, it taught entrepreneurs how to boost an existing business,



and that through the program young people are educated to become better individuals in the society.

After the training, I enrolled in a tailoring school and Alhamdulillah the progress has been massive. I can now make simple gowns, facemasks and bags.

I am growing in the business of bag making, as customers are trooping in especially those getting married. With the support and motivation from the LIFE Program and the trainers, I am not where I used to be and I am grateful for that.



"I have my own fashion house with the name Attus_clothier.ng which I opened just recently with an Instagram account. I mainly use social media to showcase my business using the skills and knowledge I got from the training."

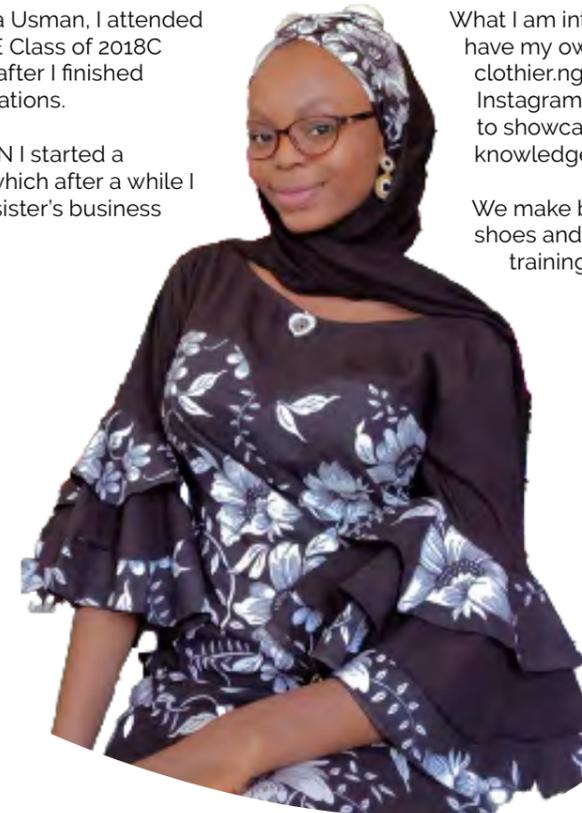
Hafsat Usman

My name is Hafsah Musa Usman, I attended Paradigm Initiative's LIFE Class of 2018C which was immediately after I finished writing my SSCE examinations.

After graduating from PIN I started a business in milk candy which after a while I stopped and joined my sister's business (a clothing line).

What I am into right now is fashion and Design. I have my own fashion house with the name Attus_clothier.ng which I opened just recently with an Instagram account. I mainly use social media to showcase my business using the skills and knowledge I got from the training.

We make beautiful dresses and also sell fabrics, shoes and veils. With what I've learnt from the training, I keep on trying.





"I made the choice of applying the knowledge and skills that we were taught in the training, and with the encouragement I got from it, I am now running a textile material business like shaddah, yard, caps etc at Kwari market and it has been a great adventure for me so far."

Ibrahim Adam

My name is Ibrahim Adam, an indigene of Kano state, a graduate of Paradigm Initiative's DakataLIFE program, Kano state, in the year 2018 and class of 2018C.

After I graduated I made up my mind to develop a reliable business so as to stand on my own, so I made the choice of applying the knowledge and skills that we were taught in the training, and with the encouragement I got from it, I am now running a textile material business like shaddah, yard,



caps etc at Kwari market and it has been a great adventure for me so far.

There are no words that can express how I feel and to show appreciation to my teachers most especially Malama/aunty Amina and the whole organization itself cause it's among the source code changer to my life in which I am doing so awesome in. Thanks a lot.



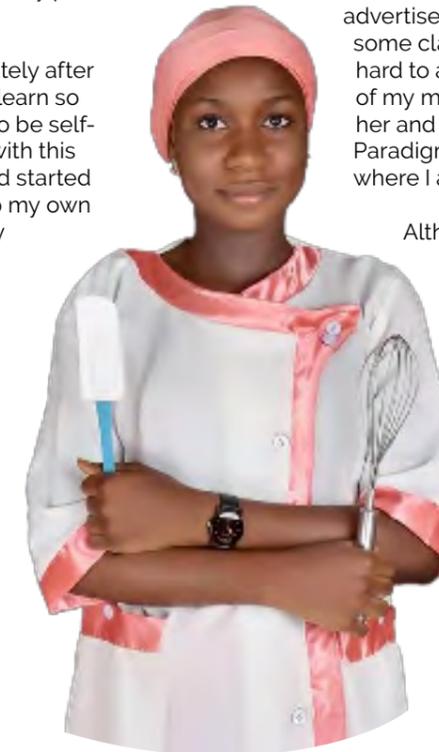
"Although I'm still pursuing my goals because with each step you take you are still discovering some new tactics, but with my newly acquired skills from Paradigm Initiative, I have opened a business page on WhatsApp and created my own logo and flyers without spending a kobo."

Fatima Saleh Abdulkarim

I am Fatima Saleh Abdulkarim of Dakata quarters, Nassarawa local government of Kano state. I am presently waiting for admission after my post-UTME to further my education.

I joined Paradigm Initiative immediately after my O'level exam where I started to learn so many things and was encouraged to be self-reliant and to have business skills, with this encouragement I began to think and started to develop ideas on how to develop my own business in order to help myself, my family and my community at large. Because I am an orphan our father passed away when I was only a toddler, my mother is the one taking care of all our needs. I have 3 sisters living in the family. So with this initiative, I started having ideas on how to help myself and the family by applying what we were taught in entrepreneurship class about writing a business plan.

My mum used to bake cakes and petty snacks so I decided to expand on it to make it become more successful and bigger by using social media to advertise and showcase my skills. I enrolled in some classes where I learned a lot and worked hard to achieve my goals, with the assurance of my mum and countless advice getting from her and the encouragement and support from Paradigm Initiative, these are what got me to where I am now.



Although I'm still pursuing my goals because with each step you take you are still discovering some new tactics, but with my newly acquired skills from Paradigm Initiative, I have opened a business page on WhatsApp and created my own logo and flyers without spending a kobo.

Thanks to Paradigm Initiative, I can now say I run a good business.



"I will never forget how my interview went because I was given a computer to type and work on some Microsoft excel calculations which I did with ease thanks to my training at the LIFE centre."

Lois Ayuba

I was in SS3 when a teacher of mine told me about a 2-days computer training (Digital readiness workshop for girls) at a place called Paradigm Initiative and he selected those to participate and I was lucky to be among those he selected. The first day of the training was great. They taught us Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

I seriously enjoyed the program like it shouldn't end. After the two days' program, I was informed that if interested I can join but after my secondary school education. I was very happy with the information I quickly told my mum about it and she gave me her support.

After my secondary school, I heard they were selling form at the centre. I quickly got mine for 500 naira. I was later called for an interview which I passed by God's grace.

Some days after the interview I was called to start the training. The first



day was so great, they taught us computers and how to build your business (BYB), how to manage your time and etiquette. Before coming to this program I never knew how to use a computer but attending the training has helped me know how to operate a computer and also how to manage my time in whatever I am doing and I know what etiquette is all about. It has also made me more creative and to be able to speak in public.

After the training, I used the skills I had learned to apply for a job at a School. I passed the interview and was hired to teach nursery 2.

I will never forget how my interview went because I was given a computer to type and work on some Microsoft excel calculations which I did with ease thanks to my training at the LIFE centre. I came out from the interview smiling because I knew I had gotten the job.

Paradigm initiative has helped me in all areas of my life. I will never forget the good things I learnt during the training.

About Paradigm Initiative

Paradigm Initiative works to connect underserved young Africans with digital opportunities, and ensures protection of their rights.

Across our regional offices in Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe and beyond, we work to connect under-served African youth with improved livelihoods through our digital inclusion and digital rights programs. Our programs include the Life Skills, ICT, Financial Readiness, Entrepreneurship (LIFE) training program, Dufuna and a digital rights program.

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