

# Skills 4 Riders in Nigeria: lessons learned

**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.”*



# Introduction

The gig economy offers great opportunity for Nigeria and particularly Lagos, its (and Africa's) most populous city. A new employment model that is growing at breakneck speed all over the world, it provides employers with a dynamic, cost-effective way of engaging staff, and staff with a flexible way of earning a decent living.

In the transport and logistics sector in Lagos, gig-economy workers are typically motorcycle delivery riders and drivers. This kind of work lends itself to younger job seekers, and barriers to entry are generally low – but successful delivery riding, in which the rider earns a good wage and their employer enjoys high customer satisfaction and loyalty, entails much more than a motorcycle and getting a package from A to B.

Delivery riders must be trained and registered to ride their machines. They must understand the rules of the road, and road safety to navigate one of the most traffic-prone cities in the world. Client-facing, they must be able to comfortably engage with, and please, customers. And they must know how to secure their own financial futures.

For all these requirements, they need training. The VET Toolbox project in Nigeria's Skills 4 Riders (S4R) programme provides exactly that, in an innovative blended-learning format that can be easily adopted by the private sector and the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector alike.



# Context

Lagos is since 2012 the most populous city in Africa, having taken this mantle from Cairo. However, how many people actually live there depends on the information source.

World Population Review, quoting the UN's World Urbanization Prospects (WUP)<sup>1</sup>, estimates Lagos's 2023 population to be 15.9-million<sup>2</sup>. However, the Lagos State Government estimates the city's population at 17.5-million, although this number has been disputed by the federal government and the National Population Commission of Nigeria, which put the number at over 21-million in 2016.

The official Nigerian unemployment rate for the fourth quarter of 2022 stood at 33.3%, according to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics homepage<sup>3</sup>; even more stark was the youth unemployment rate, at 42.1%. (Underemployment statistics were recorded as 22.8% overall and 21% for the youth.) This situation illustrates the difficulty of finding decent work, in particular for young people, in Nigeria. Many turn to the informal sector out of necessity, where work is frequently unregulated, risks are high and remuneration is low.

Lagos is, however, also a vibrant city that embraces the modern gig economy; indeed, the Nigerian

government sees the gig economy as holding considerable potential for reducing unemployment and increasing flexible income opportunities for citizens with limited education and, thus, fewer job opportunities. This makes sense, given how rapidly work is being created: according to a July 2023 presentation by 21CC Education, which built the S4R e-learning training platform, there are an estimated 78-million gig economy workers globally in 2023, and 30-million more are joining their ranks annually.

Essentially, the gig economy is a free-market labour system in which people accept short-term or freelance work – gigs, in the music world's parlance. This makes it easier and ultimately more cost-effective to employ people, thereby stimulating economic growth. In Africa, according to the International Labour Organization<sup>4</sup>, the digital economy – all internet-related commerce, which underpins the gig economy – is expected to rise strongly from 1.1% of African GDP in 2012 to as much as 6% in 2025. That is, of course, an average figure and cities such as Lagos will play an outside role in achieving that growth.

Central to the success of the gig economy are the people who deliver goods. In Lagos this primarily means motorcycle couriers or dispatch riders who

<sup>1</sup> <https://population.un.org/wup/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/lagos-population>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/documents/publication/wcms\\_753300.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/documents/publication/wcms_753300.pdf)

can ideally safely negotiate the city's infamous traffic to make timely deliveries. This type of work offers young people the opportunity to find decent employment that pays well and in time: in fact, a report by insight2impact in partnership with the Lagos Business School found that e-hailing drivers (a similar gig-economy job) earn an average monthly income of NGN159 978, which is more than five times the national NGN30 000 monthly minimum wage<sup>5</sup>.

However, a range of challenges that stand in the way of both gig-economy operators and their riders: high staff churn, with riders switching between companies that provide below-par services; high employee onboarding and training costs; lack of a formalised training approach; riders' limited education; and companies working in silos to address a situation that is common to them all, instead of cooperating and reaping benefits such as cost savings and recognised industry standards.

Also, there are challenges that must be addressed for motorcycle dispatch riders to be considered professional: 1) providing quality service up to the point of delivery; 2) having digital skills to make them marketable to employers; 3) embracing road safety; and 4) learning personal financial skills to drive long-term thinking around work and meeting daily needs.

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, with S4R it has supported the training of trainers and the development of training materials to professionalise the motorcycle delivery sector, with the ultimate aim of incorporating such training into the formal TVET sector.

This initiative required partnerships with a range of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Transportation (MoT); the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST), which has the federal mandate to regulate the courier and logistics industry, including rider training; the Lagos State Driver's Institute (LASDRI), an agency of the MoT that is inter alia responsible for training and licensing professional drivers in Lagos state; Jobberman, a service provider that matches job seekers with operators; 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 Bolt, ERRAND.NG, Glovo, Gokada, Jand2Gidi, Jise, Jumia, Sendstack, Uber and many more.

What sets the S4R project apart from all other such initiatives, particularly in the formal TVET space, is its self-paced, blended learning approach: some training is done in person, but much of the developed content is accessed online by trainees, who complete a series of short modules in their own time. This online content, which was especially developed by 21CC Education on behalf of the VET Toolbox project, has the audience in mind: it uses gamification principles to present an easy-to-follow, engaging interface that is immediately familiar to users, especially younger adults. It also helps improve the digital skills of riders who have not previously accessed such platforms.

Another differentiator for the S4R platform is its unique matching function: riders who complete modules build a skills passport on the platform,

<sup>5</sup> [https://cenfri.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL\\_Nigeria-e-hailing-note\\_Aug-2020.pdf](https://cenfri.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_Nigeria-e-hailing-note_Aug-2020.pdf)



from which companies can source highly skilled and certified riders.

The e-learning aspect of the training means that dispatch riders do not need to choose between going to work and learning, as the platform comprises a series of short, 10- to 15-minute modules that they can complete at their convenience, such as in between deliveries. For less-educated riders or those who might need digital support, a dedicated staff member at the operator can spend an hour or two on assisting them.

## Objectives

The S4R programme was conceptualised after an assessment of sectors in Nigeria with the potential to tackle unemployment, and create flexible but regular income opportunities and decent jobs for youth. Part of the rationale for the VET Toolbox project is that it is opportunity-driven, with a focus on supporting organisations that promote employment and income generation in target countries through the development of relevant training capacity and resources.

Objectives for the S4R programme included the following:

- Drive public-private dialogue – a consultative and mutually beneficial partnership between the public and private sectors around the training and professional development of dispatch riders
- Develop training modules for riders that encompass road safety and safe driving, digital and financial literacy, and customer service, and which can be integrated both into operators' in-house training and onboarding, and the formal TVET curriculum
- Promote decent jobs and income in the gig economy, in support of Nigerian government policy, by professionalising motorcycle delivery riding
- Promote employment, in particular, of the youth and women in the male-dominated transport and logistics sector
- Provide a platform where riders who have completed their training online can find work with dispatch service companies

# Implementation

“There is huge potential in the gig economy sector in Lagos to create youth employment. This is why we created the Skills 4 Riders programme,” says Kikelomo Collins-Chibeze, head of GIZ’s VET Toolbox project in Nigeria. Also, with the gig economy in Lagos growing strongly in recent years, creating many delivery jobs, “there is a need to professionalise riders”.

The S4R project was conceptualised, created and implemented by the VET Toolbox Nigeria team and its partners in under two years. GIZ is the main implementing organisation, with a strong VET Toolbox team based in Abuja and supported by consultancy Gesellschaft für Agrarprojekte in Übersee (GFA) on different aspects such as training implementation, knowledge management and formulating policy recommendations.

The e-learning platform was developed by 21CC Education, which specialises in logistics industry onboarding. The competency-based e-learning training content was developed and piloted along with private stakeholders in the logistics sector, including Jobberman, Glovo, Red Ridge (a training institute), as well as public sector partners NIPOST and LASDRI.

Stakeholders interviewed for this report commented positively on the platform’s relevance, its quick and easy-to-complete training modules, its professional design, its focus on its Nigerian audience, and its easy-to-follow, gamified user interface. The blended learning approach, combining the e-learning platform with traditional in-person learning, is innovative in the TVET space in Nigeria.

But it “makes sense”, says Glovo Nigeria operations manager Ify Adah, because it suits both younger riders and more mature riders, who tend to be less tech-savvy.





## **Abdul-Rasheed Ahmed, assistant GM licensing and renewal, NIPOST (retired)**

The Nigerian Post Office (NIPOST) is legally mandated to ensure that dispatch riders are adequately trained, says Abdul-Rasheed Ahmed, the assistant general manager in charge of licensing and renewal in NIPOST's Courier and Logistics Regulatory Department.

Road safety training is compulsory for dispatch riders – “we have to ensure that everyone has an operating licence, and manage compliance,” says Ahmed – and the Skills 4 Riders (S4R) e-learning platform not only offers safety modules but also complementary training on digital and financial literacy, and customer service.

S4R's blended learning approach – employing both e-learning and in-person training – means that it can accommodate trainees of varying literacy and digital literacy levels, as is the case with dispatch riders.

Ultimately, says Ahmed, professionalising dispatch riding holds benefits for everyone: the business sector, customers and, most importantly, the dispatch riders themselves. Better working leads to more business, which in turn drives better remuneration for the rider.



## Afusat Tihamiyu, general manager, LASDRI

The Lagos State Drivers' Institute (LASDRI) is concerned with improving commercial driving through training – giving it synergy with aims of the Skills 4 Riders (S4R) project.

“Our main purpose is training,” says LASDRI general manager Afusat Tihamiyu, “because safety is very germane; it is key.”

The S4R e-learning approach is “very important” to improving professional driving skills, she says. And apart from the fact that people can learn “from the comfort of their own house”, it also promotes professional driving as a career among young people and women, the latter until now largely absent from Nigeria’s transport and logistics sector.

“Women driving for a living is a very good initiative,” says Afusat, pointing out that they are able to compete with men in this field without problems. But first, training them to be professional drivers is essential.

“If you train [women], you give them the ability to work,” Afusat argues.

In that regard, she continues, LASDRI is ready to play its part in professionalising drivers, and it is open to further cooperation with its partners in S4R.



He continues that S4R complements Glovo's own training offering, which focuses on soft and personal skills, and adds "a more robust content library" for rider training. That's good for Glovo because riders stay, Adah says: "When we have well-trained riders, they're less likely to churn. There is that retention aspect to [the training]."

Another innovation and an important element of the online training platform is the job matchmaking service that allows dispatch service companies to connect with prospective dispatch riders who have completed training modules. The idea is to help link companies needing certain skills with potential riders who have those skills, saving time and cost in the recruitment process.

Both private and public sector partners have highlighted how easily the S4R platform can be dovetailed with their own training programmes and complement the training that they already provide. In addition, S4R, which adds value to riders beyond their work with topics such as financial literacy and digital literacy, can be easily replicated by other Nigerian states as well as in other countries.

Most importantly, the primary target market for the project - dispatch riders such as Sebyy Ekanem, who works for Glovo - see the value of the training content to their professional development, and the appeal of the e-learning approach.

"It is educational and enlightening, and is based on the work that I'm doing," says Ekanem of the S4R platform, which he continues is easy to follow and visually appealing. "Riders should be doing this training all the time."

Ekanem is impressed that Glovo has been involved as a private sector partner in the S4R project and

is incorporating the e-learning platform into its rider onboarding training.

"That Glovo is creating this kind of training shows it cares for its riders - and caring translates into harder work," he says.



# Lessons learned

## Key successes

The VET Toolbox project facilitated the first structured public-private dialogue in Nigeria around the gig economy, including ministries, regulators, government institutions and the private sector. Excellent cooperation between the members of these two broad stakeholder groups, and the consulting teams brought on board, subsequently underpinned many of the successful elements of the S4R programme.

### Coordinating using a demand-driven VET logic

This stakeholder partnership, for example, informed the development of the e-learning platform content, using a demand-driven vocational education and training (VET) logic – a modular, interactive, participatory and learner-centric approach that combines theoretical and practical training elements consisting of industry-determined competencies.

This was supported by strong coordination from 21CC Education, and guidance from GFA on adhering to the required e-learning modules' competencies within the given skills framework setting. SEDIN, a pro-poor growth and education initiative also implemented in Nigeria by GIZ, assisted with training materials.

Accordingly, the e-learning platform that was created can easily be applied by any TVET institution in Nigeria.

### Taking a learner-centric – a rider-centric – perspective

Dispatch riders do not generally have time for long training sessions, and it is unfair to make them forfeit paying work for training.

The learner-centricity of the S4R platform, with its flexibility, 10- to 15-minute training “nuggets”, gamification style and Nigerian voiceover for facilitating comprehension, was developed with their needs in mind. It encourages them to learn at their convenience, such as when they are at home or in between deliveries at work.

The e-learning platform is now hosted on a GIZ platform called Atingi, which will be accessible to riders in Nigeria and beyond. It supports the learner-centric approach in two ways: the self-paced learning described above by riders who are more tech-savvy, and in-person training – either in-house at a company or at a training facility – for those who require a more personal, conventional experience.

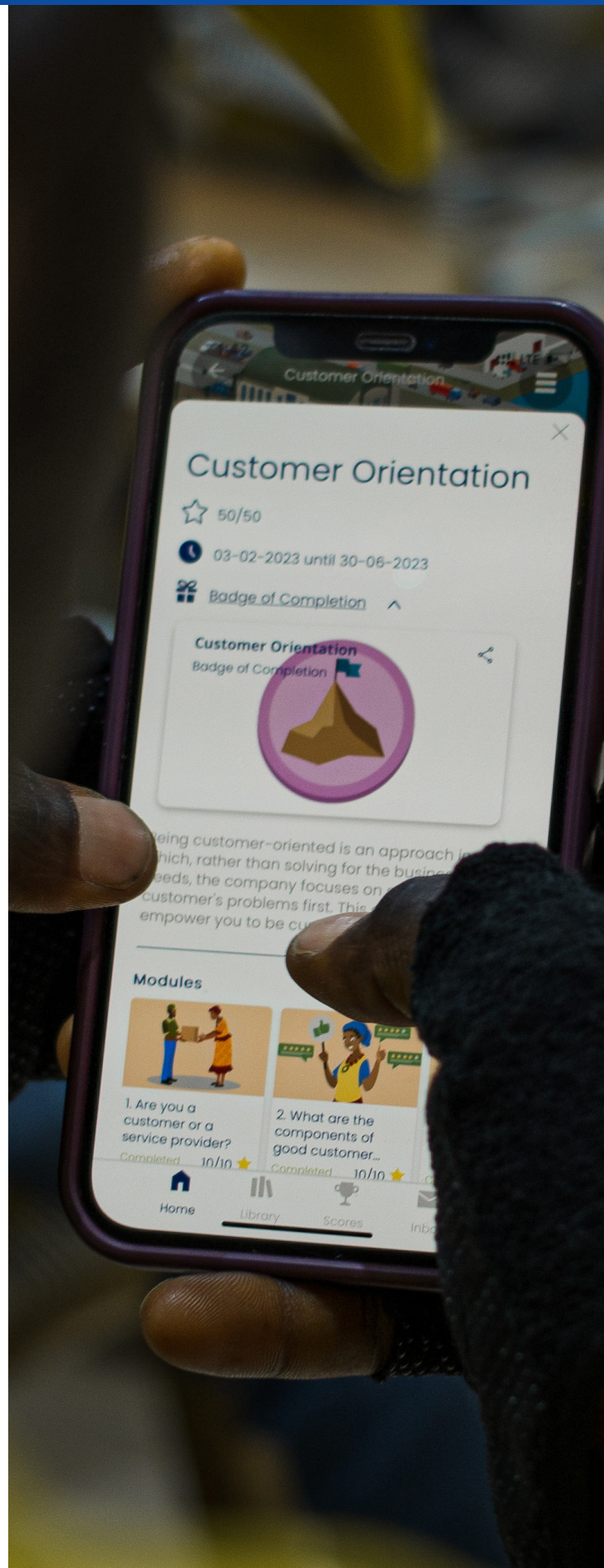
The beauty of the S4R platform's modular structure, in addition, is the ability to focus on certain training elements only, when it suits them. For example, Glovo has adopted a pilot initiative to train 20 riders on the S4R safety topic alone; this practical training will be provided by LASDRI, which was capacitated as the ToT trainer by the overall S4R programme.

Over and above learning, the job matchmaking element of the S4R platform, where dispatch riders who have undergone training are showcased through a skills passport to prospective companies in the dispatch service space, is innovative and holds great potential for jobseekers and companies alike once it is activated.

## Looking to a sustainable future

The S4R programme, a pilot, has already delivered several key successes, including:

- The training of 20 trainers (ToT), among them seven women and 13 men, from the public and private sectors
- The training of 200 dispatch riders in the pilot phase
- The decision of LASDRI to institutionalise S4R in its training, with support from NIPOST and the MoT. The three organisations have agreed to certify and adopt the training
- The agreement of private organisations to implement the training as part of onboarding and refresher training. Others will use the style and format of the training for their own, meaning that S4R is influencing the way training is being done in this sector
- The taking up of S4R modules by the GIZ Gig Economy Global Project, which will add this training to its list of programmes to be used beyond Nigeria. Its inherent scalability ensures that the S4R programme can be mirrored, customised and scaled across geographies and audience groups
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## Establishment of the Gig Economy Partners Forum

In collaboration with LSETF, the VET Toolbox project has set up the Gig Economy Partners Forum (GEPF). The forum brings together leaders from the private and public sectors for conversations and discourse on employment promotion, youth advancement, and issues, challenges and policies that affect the gig economy in Lagos.

This forum is the first of its kind: previously, organisations rarely spoke to each other or cooperated. However, they see value in presenting a united front to drive and promote the gig economy sector.

There is recognition in the public and private sectors of the S4R programme's bilateral value: it both supports the Nigerian government's policy to harness the gig economy to stimulate economic growth and job creation, and the private sector's need to professionalise its riders.

## Recommendations

- Mobilisation of stakeholders, in a variety of ways, is vital to the success of S4R. The GEPF, as a stakeholders' forum, has an important role to play in mobilising not just its own members, but trade unions, communities and riders themselves to know and use the platform
- CEO-level and decision-making executives, as well as high-ranking public officials, should be included in the GEPF's dialogues
- Use demand-driven VET logic in developing e-learning courses, for it to be easily applied and integrated by TVET institutions
- Promote accreditation of S4R e-learning courses by the Lagos State MoT and NIPOST, and forge partnerships with training institutions to offer the programme. Sub-activities within the value chain can be investigated to promote women and youth participation, customer care and other objectives
- Promote the use of the job matchmaking functionality on the e-learning platform



# Challenges

The S4R programme achieved a great deal, including the creation of the S4R training platform, the initiation of public-private dialogues around professionalising dispatch riders and the establishment of the GEPF. As with any ground-breaking project, however, there are bound to be a few challenges – and thus also lessons to be learned – along the way.

For example, stakeholder representatives participating in workshops need to be decision-makers in their organisations. At times they were not, which led to delays in piloting the training and a lack of ownership around hosting and implementing the S4R curriculum. This has been rectified with the GEPF, which includes decision-makers.

Timing issues during the platform development phase, which took a while longer than expected, meant that important test feedback was not received from dispatch riders and trainers. Substantiated user feedback testing is required, with users' baseline knowledge assessed beforehand to compare with their post-training knowledge levels.

This is important for ultimately optimising the content for user uptake and completion, as well as determining users' knowledge gain and, importantly, behavioural change. An optimal training platform is also a more attractive investment prospect for companies.

Also, solely virtual tuition was found not to be the best way to approach the ToT; some trainers found it difficult to fully engage with the online content, and additional in-person training needed to be arranged.

While the gig economy is seen as having the potential for employing a greater percentage of women, it still features a strong gender imbalance. This is especially so in transport and logistics, a traditionally male-dominated domain. The upshot is that it is difficult to find female dispatch riders, and therefore female S4R training beneficiaries.

There are, however, many ways in which women can be encouraged to become dispatch riders. For example, through:

- Awareness-raising, using public campaigns, public-private dialogues and advocacy in women's groups to present dispatch riding as a profession of interest to women
- Training, in which female trainers teach women-only groups of riders
- Specific road-safety training modules for women: safe transport, especially after dark, is an important road safety issue for female road users, who face harassment, violence and robbery threats. Road safety is a critically important gender equality issue, encompassing the concepts of freedom of movement and social empowerment
- Financial incentives, such as providing motorcycles and mobile phones to women as they have even less access to money to make such investments than men. Companies could offer starter kits with the necessary equipment for women in the logistics space, or even a saving accounts for their children's future, where part of their salary is deposited in a separate account that only they can access

# Recommendations

- Ensure that organisations' decision-makers have hands-on involvement in the S4R project
- Financial or in-kind support by private companies for training platforms such as S4R is desirable, for them to be sustainable
- Create a consolidated feedback loop to test the S4R platform thoroughly during the pilot phase, and for periodic updates and further extensions to the platform
- Explore initiatives to encourage women to train as dispatch riders: awareness-raising, dialogues, advocacy, women-only training, women-focused road-safety training, financial incentives
- Women should be encouraged to consider becoming dispatch riders, through outreach initiatives such as gig-economy job fairs. When fresh S4R content is developed, the training modules should be amended to their specific training needs.
- Prioritise women as daytime delivery dispatch riders

## Kikelomo Collins-Chibeze, head: GIZ VET Toolbox 2 project, Nigeria

The gig economy in Lagos is growing, says Kikelomo Collins-Chibeze, head of the VET Toolbox 2 project in Nigeria. Dispatch riders have become major players in this nascent sector, “and there is huge potential in the gig-economy sector in Lagos to create youth employment”.

In a city such as Lagos, she continues, with its “really crazy and hectic” traffic, getting goods such as parcels from one point to another can be a challenge, and lead to delays and financial losses. Motorcycle deliveries are, therefore, “one of the most efficient ways of moving around”.

Dispatch riding offers the advantages of low barriers to entry for jobseekers and the potential to earn comparatively good incomes – up to five times the Nigerian national minimum wage. But there is a need to professionalise dispatch riding, and that is how the Skills 4 Riders (S4R) project came about.

Its blended learning approach, incorporating both online and in-person learning, is novel in the Nigerian technical and vocational education and training (TVET) space. But digital learning is the way of the future for tertiary education and S4R is a trailblazer in this regard, avers Collins-Chibeze: “Digitalisation of training is key to taking TVET online.”





# Conclusion

A lot has already been achieved in a short space of time with the development of the S4R programme, which is ready for upscaling in Lagos, exporting to other Nigerian centres and institutionalising in the country's TVET system. The VET Toolbox has done its job, which was to create and initially implement a training programme that will make a substantial difference in Nigeria.

Skills 4 Riders can do exactly that, in a way that professionalises dispatch riders, making them more employable and able to earn better incomes, and supports the federal government's policy of promoting the gig economy as a driver of job creation and economic growth. Through its content S4R also promotes road safety, personal financial security, digital savvy and a service-oriented business culture.

More work lies ahead: for the Nigerian public and private sectors to integrate the S4R platform, which is innovative in its form and content, into their training and onboarding systems. To sustain and improve it over time and adopt it as a gig-economy training benchmark.

Indeed, the S4R platform is brimming with potential for Nigeria's economy, the country's gig-economy operators and, most importantly, for the job-seeking public. Achieving this potential is exciting but it requires the ongoing, active support of both public and private sectors, certainly. Both have indicated their enthusiasm for S4R and for it to be widely adopted, both in the formal TVET system and within company training and onboarding programmes.

Perhaps the most tangible benefit will be for Lagosian consumers, however. In a city choked by traffic, motorcycle dispatch riders offer businesses the opportunity to get goods to their customers quickly, safely and with a smile.



Thank you.

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