



FUSION – TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Grantee
DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY TRUST (DOT)

Grant amount
GBP 517,552

Project duration
May 2015–June 2018

Implementing partner
VETA

Beneficiaries
Tutors, students and out-of-school youth

Location
Dar es Salaam, Pwani and Morogoro Regions



Students learn skills at a VETA centre, Dar es Salaam.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Youth unemployment is a nationwide problem in Tanzania. Although available government statistics show unemployment in Tanzania at 12.7 per cent,¹ studies have indicated that unemployment among young people is higher than 50 per cent,² particularly in urban areas.

The Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) FUSION initiative is an innovative response to what has been described as an unemployment crisis. The initiative integrates two acclaimed DOT programmes that both use a unique youth-led social learning model to embed change in schools and communities:

- TeachUp! brings innovative use of technology, new learning methods and digital skills content to the classroom: and
- ReachUp! brings digital skills, workforce skills and entrepreneurial empowerment to out-of-school, out-of-work young people nearby.

The FUSION initiative is a collaborative effort, bringing together the expertise of DOT Tanzania and the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA), and operates in VETA centres and communities in Dar es Salaam, Pwani and Morogoro Regions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The FUSION pilot aimed to transform five VETA centres into community learning hubs serving both students in the formal vocational education system and out-of-school youth in the surrounding communities. Prior to the project, VETA only served youth who were in the formal setting and registered as VETA students.

Digital skills were taught by integrating ICT exercises into the teaching of business skills, and these lessons took place in VETA IT labs instead of the normal classroom. The community-based component of FUSION served as a motivating gateway for disadvantaged youth to appreciate the opportunities that vocational training offers. Importantly, a social learning platform facilitated peer-to-peer networking and encouraged collaboration and the sharing of experiences among the young users.

Initially planned as a two-year pilot, in 2017 the FUSION initiative was extended by 14 months, in order to increase and sustain the programme's impact. Following the successes of the pilot phase on the skills and abilities of youth and VETA tutors, DOT used the extension to leverage learning from the pilot to adapt the programme's design.

Through the pilot and extension phases, FUSION targeted 3,000 young people (800 VETA students and

¹ Tanzania Human Development Report (THDR), 2014.

² State of Youth in Tanzania, Restless Development, 2011.



2,200 out-of-school youth), and 170 VETA tutors who would be engaged through 29 youth interns and teacher facilitators.

PROJECT RESULTS

The project had a number of notable positive results:

- Increased awareness of VETA programmes among out-of-school youth: An unanticipated, yet significant success has been the ability of VETA to attract out-of-school youth, thereby reaching the most vulnerable young men and women and improving their livelihoods. Forty-four per cent of respondents to the project's outcome survey were aware of the various programmes offered by VETA in their communities. This increased awareness has translated into enhanced use of VETA centres as community learning hubs.
- Increases in demand for VETA services and in enrolment: Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of community members and out-of-school youth who were surveyed were enrolled or planned to enrol with VETA as a result of participating in DOT's programmes – greatly exceeding the target of 30 per cent.
- Men are overall more likely than women to enrol: Seventy per cent of men and 55 per cent of women expressed interest in enrolment. VETA has traditionally attracted many more men than women although this is now changing.

KEY LESSONS

Strengthen intern selection and support: Robust selection criteria for prospective interns delivering peer-to-peer learning is critical. Interns who took part in the pilot phase of FUSION recommended that those who 'walk the talk' are best placed to motivate and inspire young participants.

Target young people who are vulnerable: As part of the project's outreach efforts, out-of-school youth from disadvantaged areas in Dar es Salaam, Pwani and Morogoro Regions were recruited into the programme. Generally, these young people faced greater challenges in accessing the start-up capital and resources needed to launch their businesses.

Fosters programme sustainability by supporting teachers: Varying access to, and quality of, ICT facilities and internet

connection at VETA centres presented a challenge for tutors wishing to apply digital skills and tools in their teaching practice. To address this, DOT supported tutors' internet access through the provision of dongles which resulted in their increased engagement in searching for and developing learning resources. Subsequently, some tutors expressed their willingness to use their own funds for these purposes, as they could clearly see it adds value to their work.

GENDER EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

A study commissioned by HDIF and carried out by Newcastle University (UK) examined whether DOT's inclusive approach had made a difference. The study found that once women overcame their initial fears and started to engage with the technology and demonstrate their ability, their self-confidence grew. For example, ReachUp! has engendered positive changes in behaviours and attitudes between female and male students who are encouraged to work in mixed groups during classes. Both men and women in the focus groups commented that women's ICT skills are sometimes better than men's, and that all members of the group are willing to help each other.

PRINCIPLES FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Understand the ecosystem: To increase the likelihood of the success and sustainability of FUSION, DOT needed to understand and work with the Tanzanian vocational education ecosystem. In the project design phase, DOT included and considered the regulatory, political and technical environment, and the institutions, communities and individuals it would be working with. It was through this process that VETA was identified as the idea partner.

NEXT STEPS

During the final half of the project, DOT Tanzania forged several partnerships with a growing ecosystem of public, private and civil society actors across Tanzania. The nature of these collaborations vary, but centre on expanding the range of services and learning opportunities available to DOT beneficiaries and leveraging new networks of youth and women in need of entrepreneurship and digital skills training. Through partnerships such as these, DOT is working to expand and sustain programming for youth, through the buy-in of a growing network of partners, well after FUSION ends.



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