



International
Association for
Volunteer
Effort

IAVE-IBM Reskilling Revolution Africa (RRA)- Skillsbuild Project

Pilot Phase Report

August 2025

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Executive Summary

The IAVE Reskilling Revolution Africa (RRA) SkillsBuild pilot demonstrated how **volunteering can be a pathway to youth employability**. Leveraging IBM's SkillsBuild platform alongside technical experts, local facilitators, and peer mentors, the program delivered digital and professional skills training to young people in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and South Africa. The initiative enhanced job readiness, fostered community-led growth, and contributed to long-term economic resilience.

Peer-to-peer mobilization emerged as the most effective recruitment strategy, as graduates encouraged peers to enroll, underscoring the power of trust-based networks over broad digital outreach. Training in cybersecurity, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and entrepreneurship directly addressed skills gaps, improved employability, and encouraged lifelong learning.

Key Results

Learners Mobilized	Engaged Learners*	Total Learning Hours	Course Completion
54,791	30,410	94,496	153,860
Digital Credentials Awarded		Gender Distribution	
2,160		62.6% female, 37.4% male (with female participation highest in South Africa at 82%)	

* Unique Learners refers to individuals who have registered on the SkillsBuild platform and have engaged in or completed a module on the platform.

Learners reported significant personal and professional benefits, gaining transformative digital skills and highlighting the practical value of the training for their studies and career aspirations.

Mobilization Strategies

- **Peer-to-peer recruitment** proved most impactful, creating supportive learning communities and expanding reach.
- **Community partnerships** with local organizations, schools, and traditional leaders built trust, increased access, and supported learners in underserved areas.
- **Digital campaigns** raised visibility but were less effective in sustaining enrollment.
- **Strategic partnerships** at the country level, including with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (South Africa) and local foundations in Nigeria, added credibility and created employment pathways.

Nigeria

Executive Summary



Country Nigeria

Submitted By Young Advocates for a Sustainable and Inclusive Future (YASIF)

Reporting Period November 7, 2024 - June 6, 2025

Project Title IAVE-IBM Reskilling Revolution Africa (RRA) – SkillsBuild Pilot Project

Impact Summary

Quantitative (metrics from SkillsBuild platform)



Number of learners registered

22,351



Number of engaged learners (conversion rate of 54%)

12,139



Number of course completions

83,995



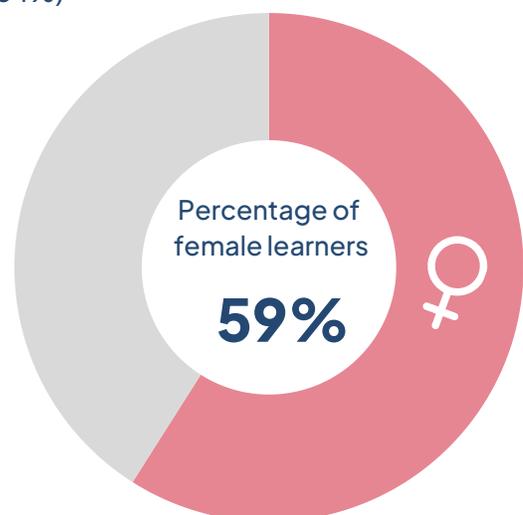
Number of learning hours

37,066



Number of digital credentials issued

1,227



Qualitative (metrics assessed by IAVE Country Implementation Partner)

The SkillsBuild project in Nigeria achieved the following key outcomes:

- **Created meaningful pathways for young Nigerians to develop in-demand skills:** This involved providing access to relevant training and certifications in areas critical for the evolving job market, equipping participants with practical abilities.
- **Facilitated employment in emerging industries:** The program successfully prepared skilled individuals for possible job opportunities in sectors experiencing growth, enabling them to secure jobs and contribute to the new economy.
- **Leveraged volunteer support and the IBM SkillsBuild platform to drive inclusive workforce development:** Utilizing both human capital (volunteers) and a robust digital learning platform, the initiative expanded access to skills training across diverse communities, promoting equitable opportunities.
- **Fostered long-term economic resilience within the country:** Empowering individuals with valuable skills and facilitating their entry into employment, the project contributed to strengthening the overall economic capacity and adaptability of Nigeria's workforce for the future.

Popular Learning Courses and Learning Pathways:

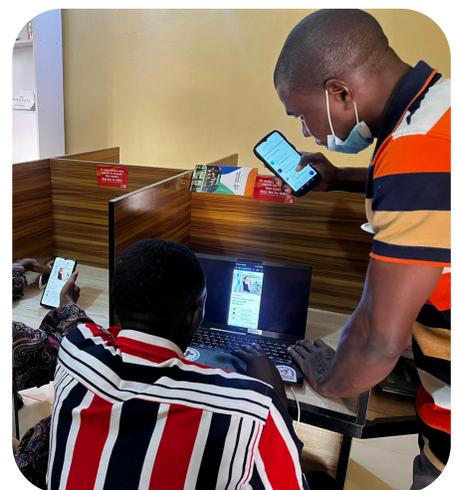
- Education Path
- Entrepreneurship Path
- Job Readiness Path
- Climate Change and Green Economy Path
- Finance Path
- Youth Empowerment Path
- Business Path
- Project Management Path

Project Report – Nigeria

Specific Objectives

In Nigeria, our objectives for the Pilot Project include:

- **Identify and provide training in the most in-demand digital and employability skills:** To create meaningful pathways for young Nigerians to develop in-demand skills and secure employment in emerging industries, we conducted a nationwide survey to understand the key skills Nigerian youth need, ensuring our courses are aligned with local job market demands and real-world opportunities.
- **Increase awareness and actively engage Nigerian youths in the SkillsBuild program:** We used targeted outreach and social media strategies to reach young people across Nigeria and encourage their active participation.
- **Expand access to learning resources and physical training centers across underserved communities:** We partnered with local organizations to offer access to devices, internet, and safe learning spaces where learners could participate fully.
- **Encourage peer-led learning by empowering learners to take on leadership roles:** We created opportunities for learners to support and mentor each other, fostering collaboration and strengthening their communication and leadership skills.
- **Improve learner retention and course completion rates to support successful employment outcomes:** We implemented supportive measures and engagement tactics that motivated learners to complete their training and become job-ready.



Key Activities During Reporting Period

- **Identification of In-demand courses in Nigeria:** In Q1 of the pilot phase of the RRA project, our first activity was to understand which digital and employability courses were most in demand across Nigeria. To achieve this, we designed and rolled out a targeted survey to participants and key stakeholders. The survey collected data on skill gaps, career interests, and industry trends from a diverse demographic.
- **Community Mobilization and Engagement:** Recognizing the importance of community in sustaining participation, groundwork for community engagement began in November. This involved identifying key local influencers, initiating relationship-building efforts, and designing an engagement framework to foster learner support systems. These foundational steps enabled smoother rollout of engagement activities in December, built early trust, and encouraged a stronger sense of ownership and participation among learners.
- **Implementation of Physical Training Sessions:** We launched physical training sessions in Kano, Adamawa, and Ondo to complement online learning and provide practical, face-to-face instruction. The physical sessions offered personalized support to reinforce theoretical concepts. The sessions were well-attended and positively received, enhancing learner satisfaction and practical skill acquisition. They were paused during the holiday period and scheduled to resume in January.
- **Social Media and Digital Campaigns:** Social media advertisements were employed to promote the program and attract learners. Content included course highlights, learner testimonials, and motivational posts tailored to resonate with target demographics. The campaigns boosted visibility, generated interest, and contributed to a surge in program registrations and engagement.

Targeted Location in Nigeria & Number of Communities Reached

- **Kano, Adamawa, Ondo States** – 6 communities

Human Resources and Support

- **Staff:** Project Coordinator, Lead Facilitator, M&E Officer
- **Volunteers:** 3
- **Facilitators/Trainers:** 15 (8 Mentors, 5 Interns, 2 Facilitators)

Number of Youth Mobilized

- 22,351

Mobilization Strategies Employed

- **Social Media Advertising:** To increase awareness and engagement, we launched targeted social media campaigns across key platforms. These campaigns showcased the program's benefits and included learner testimonials to appeal to a diverse audience across the target regions.
 - **Effectiveness:** The use of relatable and inspiring content significantly boosted visibility and interest in the program. As a result, we saw increased registrations and active participation, demonstrating the strategy's success in attracting and motivating potential learners.
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** Strategic partnerships were vital in enhancing the program's reach and delivery. In December, collaborations with organizations such as the Today for Tomorrow Foundation (TFT), Naowa Skills Centre in Adamawa, Skills Axis in Kano, and Zee Anex Learning Center in Adamawa were established to provide physical spaces and resources for in-person sessions.
 - **Effectiveness:** These partnerships ensured accessibility for learners without internet access and improved hands-on learning opportunities. The collaboration helped broaden the program's impact and reach in underserved areas.
- **Internship Opportunities for Active Learners:** To promote leadership and peer engagement, selected active learners were given the opportunity to assist trainers in facilitating lessons starting in December. This initiative empowered learners to take on leadership roles and support their peers.
 - **Effectiveness:** The peer-led approach significantly enhanced learner engagement and participation. It also improved learners' communication and collaboration skills, fostering a stronger sense of ownership and community within learning cohorts.
- **Themed Days for Engagement:** To maintain motivation and structure, Themed Days were introduced:
 - **Motivation Monday:** Featured inspiring quotes and success stories to kickstart the week positively.
 - **TakeAction Friday:** Encouraged learners to review progress, set goals, and stay committed.
 - **Effectiveness:** The themed activities contributed to a supportive and dynamic learning environment.

- **Peer Mentorship and Internship Program:** To strengthen learner support and promote a collaborative learning environment, we introduced a peer mentorship and internship initiative. Learners who had previously completed the program were engaged as mentors and interns, supporting current participants by sharing guidance, motivation, and real-world insights.
 - **Effectiveness:** This approach significantly enhanced engagement and retention. Peer mentors helped demystify complex topics, encouraged participation, and created a relatable support system that contributed to learners' overall success and confidence.

Number of Engaged Learners

12,139

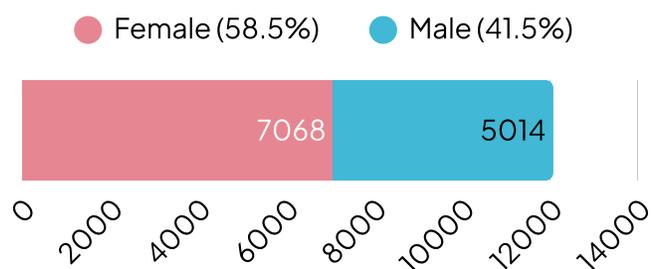
Number of Digital Credentials Issued

1,227

Popular Learning Courses and Learning Pathways

- Education Path
- Entrepreneurship Path
- Job Readiness Path
- Climate change and Green Economy Path
- Finance Path
- Youth Empowerment Path
- Business Path
- Project Management Path

Gender Disaggregation



Direct Impacts

- **Wide-Scale Learner Mobilization and Gender Inclusion:** We successfully mobilized 12,135 learners, comprising 7,098 females and 5,034 males, demonstrating strong outreach and gender-balanced participation. This reflects the program's commitment to inclusivity and equitable access to learning opportunities.
- **High Volume of Course Completions:** A total of 83,198 course completions were recorded, indicating consistent learner engagement and sustained participation across multiple learning modules. This high completion rate is a testament to the effectiveness of the structured support and flexible learning design.
- **Digital Credentials Earned:** 1,227 learners earned recognized digital credentials in high-demand skill areas. These credentials serve as verifiable evidence of learners' competencies and enhance their opportunities in the job market.
- **Closing the Digital Skills Gap:** The outcomes clearly demonstrate the program's impact in driving digital empowerment, increasing job readiness, and contributing to efforts aimed at closing the digital and employability skill gaps in Nigeria.



Learner Testimonial

I found the courses to be exceptionally comprehensive and practical, with easily implementable concepts. The periodic tests and final assessment were invaluable in tracking my progress and reinforcing my understanding.

– Fahad Ibrahim Yusif, Youth Learner, Nigeria



Indirect Impacts

- **Increased Employability and Workplace Readiness:** The introduction of internship opportunities for active learners significantly enhanced their real-world experience. By assisting trainers and mentoring peers, participants were able to:
 - Apply newly acquired digital and soft skills in practical settings
 - Develop leadership, communication, and facilitation skills
 - Gain confidence and credibility in professional roles

These experiences improved learners' readiness for employment and positioned them as strong candidates in the job market.

- **Entrepreneurial Skill Development:** The peer-led learning model and internship roles nurtured problem-solving, initiative-taking, and collaboration, key competencies for aspiring entrepreneurs. Learners gained exposure to:
 - Project coordination and team management
 - Public speaking and interpersonal communication
 - Adaptability and self-directed learning

These skills are critical not only for employment but also for launching and managing small businesses or freelance careers.

- **Sustained Community Engagement:** To foster ongoing support and networking, a Telegram Alumni Group was created. This platform continues to:
 - Connect graduates with job opportunities and industry news
 - Serve as a hub for peer mentorship and collaboration
 - Share resources, training updates, and motivational content

By maintaining an active and supportive post-program community, the initiative encourages continuous learning and reinforces a culture of shared growth.

Challenges Encountered

- Throughout the IBM Skills-Build program, the country team faced **technical challenges** with the IBM platform. These included **system update delays** that hindered real-time learner progress tracking and required better technical support. Issues with **learning path management** led to 1-2 day delays in learners accessing assigned training, causing frustration and slowing down onboarding. Learners also encountered general **technical issues** such as platform errors, downtime, and lost progress, which disrupted access to resources and negatively impacted engagement and completion rates. The Nigerian country team is actively engaged in ongoing collaboration with IAVE and the IBM team to address these technical and platform challenges.

- Beyond the technical hurdles, the program also encountered considerable challenges related to **in-country skills build delivery**. **Language barriers** posed a significant obstacle in some regions, where limited English proficiency made platform navigation and content engagement difficult. **Limited access to technology and connectivity**, coupled with high data costs, restricts consistent participation, particularly in underserved areas. **Inconsistent power supply** further disrupted training schedules, while **economic constraints** created financial barriers for many learners to access necessary devices and data. Lastly, **seasonal interruptions** like school holidays led to closures of learning spaces, causing delays and reduced engagement. To tackle these in-country issues, there is existing collaboration with local partners and IAVE's ecosystem of delivery partners, alongside ongoing efforts to raise additional funding, to address the in-country challenges.



Learner Testimonial

The Education Learning Path truly exceeded my expectations, delivering engaging content and standout modules that deepened my understanding of key concepts. Notably, the program provided a comprehensive foundation for advancing my career as an IT Support Professional.

The guidance and support offered throughout the program were invaluable, helping me navigate complex topics and develop practical skills. I'm grateful for the experience and confident that it will have a lasting impact on my professional growth. – Nasir Sani, Youth Learner, Nigeria

Recommendations

- In response to the identified challenges, the country teams are actively engaged in a collaborative effort with IAVE and IBM to implement key actionable recommendations. To address persistent **technical challenges** with the IBM platform, the focus is on strengthening partnerships with IBM to **improve technical support and platform maintenance**. This involves working closely with IBM to ensure a readily accessible support system for timely issue resolution, regular updates, and comprehensive platform reviews to prevent errors and minimize downtime. Joint efforts with IBM will also ensure learners are **notified in advance** of any platform maintenance, reducing disruption.

- Concurrently, for **in-country skills build delivery**, the country teams are leveraging their collaboration with **IAVE's ecosystem of delivery partners** and **local in-country partners**. This collaboration is crucial for implementing **local language integration** in course content and support, **expanding access to technology** by establishing learning hubs and improving internet access, and **maintaining learner engagement during seasonal breaks** through virtual programs. Furthermore, the country teams, in partnership with IAVE and local stakeholders, are actively pursuing **additional funding** to adequately support these critical on-the-ground initiatives.

Key Insights

- **Surpassed Engaged Learner Target:** Successfully surpassed our target of 12,000 engaged learners, reaching a total of 12,139.
- **Data and Connectivity Constraints:** In the second quarter of the project, there was a high number of inconsistent internet access among learners, and the cost of mobile data became barriers to course completion for many learners, particularly in remote areas.



Learner Testimonial

I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to learn on this platform. The program has been incredibly enlightening, teaching me about the power of sustainability and how to apply it in all aspects of life, leveraging AI, hybrid cloud, and quantum technology.

- Jennifer Abuka, Youth Learner, Nigeria

Lessons Learned

Learners expressed challenges with committing to long training sessions and emphasized the need for clear, practical outcomes. In response, the program was adapted to offer shorter, modular content (15–20 minutes) that supports flexible, on-the-go learning. Additionally, clearer certification pathways and stronger job linkages, including access to internships and employment opportunities, were introduced to increase the tangible value of participation and better align with learners' career goals.

Ethiopia



Executive Summary

Country Ethiopia

Submitted By Serve Global

Reporting Period November 7, 2024 - June 6, 2025

Project Title IAVE-IBM Reskilling Revolution Africa (RRA) – SkillsBuild Pilot Project

Impact Summary

Quantitative (metrics from SkillsBuild platform)



Number of learners registered

17,731



Number of engaged learners (conversion rate of 54%)

10,009



Number of course completions

41,996



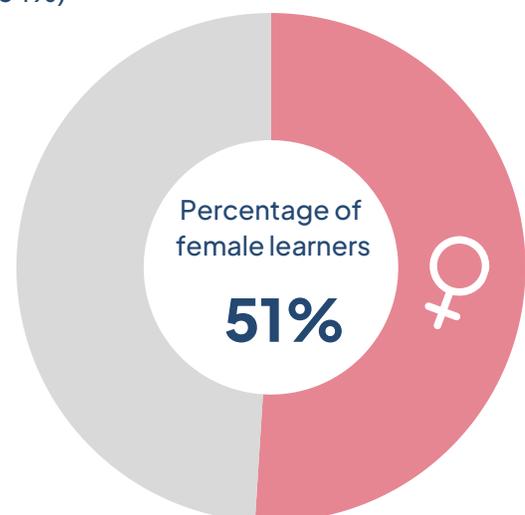
Number of learning hours

44,858



Number of digital credentials issued

678



Qualitative (metrics assessed by IAVE Country Implementation Partner)

The SkillsBuild project in Ethiopia achieved the following key outcomes:

- **Harnessing the power of volunteering:** This involved effectively mobilizing and utilizing volunteer support to expand the reach and impact of skills development initiatives across the country.
- **Provided youth access to skills development:** Through the program, young people gained crucial access to training and learning opportunities, equipping them with relevant competencies for future employment.
- **Facilitated employment in the digital and green economy:** The initiative focused on preparing youth for jobs in rapidly growing sectors like digital technology and environmentally sustainable industries, addressing critical labor market demands.
- **Leveraged the IBM SkillsBuild platform:** The program effectively utilized IBM's online learning platform as a core tool to deliver high-quality, accessible skills training to a broad audience of young individuals.
-

Popular Learning Courses and Learning Pathways:

- Project Management
- Web Development Fundamentals
- Communication Skills
- Digital Marketing
- Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals

Project Report – Ethiopia

Specific Objectives

The overall objective of the Pilot Project is to empower Ethiopian youth through skills development and promote a sustainable learning ecosystem. Specific objectives include:

- **Equip 10,000 Ethiopian youth with digital and job-readiness skills:** This involves providing access to **free online courses** via the IBM SkillsBuild platform. These courses focus on essential 21st-century skills, including **digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, and employability**.
- **Enhance employability and self-development:** We support youth in earning **globally recognized digital credentials** that can significantly improve their job prospects and foster a mindset of **lifelong learning**.
- **Promote inclusive access to online learning opportunities:** Our priority is to engage **disadvantaged and underserved youth groups**, ensuring both **gender balance and regional diversity** in participant engagement.
- **Raise awareness about the importance of skill development:** Leverage **social media, influencers, and community-based outreach** to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and effectively promote the IBM SkillsBuild platform.



- **Build a sustainable ecosystem of youth engagement:** This involves strengthening **partnerships with educational institutions, volunteer networks, and youth organizations**. This collaboration will help sustain interest and support for online learning well beyond the project's initial duration.
- **Track and measure learning outcomes and impact:** We regularly **monitor user engagement, course completions, and credentialing** using dashboards and analytics. This data is crucial for evaluating the project's effectiveness and adjusting strategies as needed to maximize impact.

Key Activities During Reporting Period

- **Youth Mobilization and Outreach:** The project implemented a comprehensive strategy across several key areas to engage youth and facilitate their skills development.
- **Participant Recruitment and Outreach:** **Conducted a wide-reaching awareness campaign** through Telegram channels, university networks, and various social media platforms to recruit participants across Ethiopia; **Partnered with over 100 high-traffic Telegram channels** and initiated outreach to schools and youth associations to expand reach.
- **Platform Onboarding and Registration:** **Guided over 17,000 youth to register** on the IBM SkillsBuild platform, offering step-by-step support to ensure successful access and engagement; **created and disseminated detailed onboarding guides** and orientation videos to simplify the registration process.
- **Content Promotion and Influencer Engagement:** **Shared curated course recommendations, weekly highlights, and motivational testimonials** from learners to encourage continued engagement; **Coordinated with Telegram influencers** and finalized promotional deals to amplify reach; **Initiated contact with TikTok influencers** to further boost registration numbers and overall platform engagement.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** **Tracked comprehensive user data**, including logins, course completions, and credentials earned, utilizing the SkillsBuild dashboard for real-time insights; **Provided weekly updates to stakeholders** and promptly flagged any technical or engagement-related challenges for timely resolution.
- **Support and Follow-up:** **Provided one-on-one support** for youth facing issues with the platform via Telegram and direct messages; **Addressed frequently asked questions** and encouraged certificate collection through proactive follow-up reminders.

Targeted Location in Ethiopia & Number of Communities Reached

- Addis Ababa and Oromia State (Adama and Bishoftu)
- The RRA project successfully reached youth in over 100 communities across Ethiopia. These communities spanned all major regions and included a diverse range of locations, including:
 - **Urban Centers and Secondary Towns:** Coverage extended to cities like Addis Ababa and specific neighborhoods within Oromia (e.g., Adama, Bishoftu).
 - **University and College Campuses:** Engaging students directly within educational institutions.
 - **Youth Associations:** Collaborating with established youth groups to reach their members.
 - **Digital Communities:** Utilizing high-traffic Telegram and other social media platforms to connect with online communities.
 - **Underserved and Marginalized Areas:** Prioritizing outreach to disadvantaged neighborhoods to ensure inclusive access to the program.



Learner Testimonial

While focusing on my academic path, I've also been eager to pick up essential skills that will help me in the future... I've completed two courses so far – AI Fundamentals and Professional Skills for the Digital World – and I've found both to be incredibly engaging and full of insights. The knowledge I gained from these courses has been invaluable and has given me the confidence to take on new challenges. – Muluken Mesele, Journalism Student, Ethiopia

Human Resources and Support

- Project Staff: 8
- SkillsBuild Ambassadors and Volunteers: 90
- Facilitators/Trainers: 6

Number of Youth Mobilized

- 17,731

Mobilization Strategies Employed

The project employed a multi-faceted approach to recruit participants and ensure their sustained engagement, with distinct methods and effectiveness for each strategy:

- **Targeted University and School Partnerships:** We engaged with **student unions, university Telegram groups, and high school networks** to promote the project directly to learners.
 - **Effectiveness:** This approach was very effective in regional cities such as Adama, Addis Ababa Dar, Hawassa, and Debrebirhan, contributing to a **geographically diverse participation** in the program.
- **Collaboration with Youth Groups and Volunteer Networks:** We mobilized Serve Global's own **volunteer base** and partnered with local youth-serving organizations to spread awareness and assist with onboarding.
 - **Effectiveness:** This helped us reach **marginalized and offline youth communities**, particularly in underserved areas, and was highly effective in fostering word-of-mouth referrals.
- **One-on-One Support via Telegram:** We provided **personalized guidance** for registration, course selection, and certificate collection through Telegram chats and voice support.
 - **Effectiveness:** This support was crucial for **reducing drop-off rates** and improving learning completion, proving particularly effective for first-time online learners.
- **Digital Literacy Orientation Sessions:** We conducted virtual sessions and shared orientation videos to guide users through the IBM SkillsBuild platform.
 - **Effectiveness:** These sessions significantly **increased confidence** and reduced confusion among learners, thereby improving overall course engagement and retention.

Number of Engaged
Learners

10,009

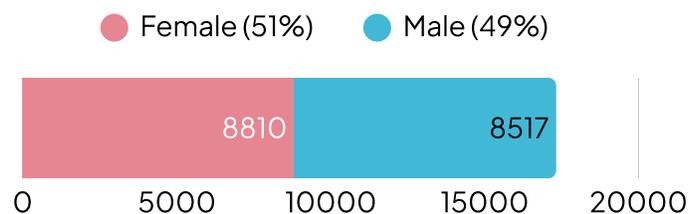
Number of Digital
Credentials Issued

678

Popular Learning Courses and Learning Pathways

- Project Management
- Web Development Fundamentals (Earn a credential)
- Communication Skills
- Digital Marketing
- Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals (Earn a credential)

Gender Disaggregation



Direct Impacts

The RRA SkillsBuild Youth Employability Initiative has made substantial progress in empowering young individuals through focused digital skills training and credentialing, including the following key achievements:

- **Skills Acquired:** Thousands of youth gained practical, in-demand skills essential for today's job market. These included **digital literacy and online productivity tools, crucial communication, teamwork, and workplace readiness abilities, and enhanced problem-solving and critical thinking**. Additionally, participants learned about entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and self-employment strategies, alongside an introduction to emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and green economy awareness.
- **Credentials Earned:** A significant outcome was the earning of **676 digital credentials** by learners who successfully completed full learning pathways and passed knowledge assessments. These credentials are **globally recognized, verifiable**, and can be added to LinkedIn profiles or resumes, greatly enhancing employability.
- **Improved Job-Readiness:** Learners reported a noticeable increase in **confidence for job searching, applying for roles, and preparing for interviews**. Many also acquired valuable knowledge in personal branding, CV/resume writing, and professional networking, equipping them better for the employment landscape.

Indirect Impacts

Beyond the direct outcomes, the initiative generated several significant indirect impacts, fostering broader positive change within communities:

- **Entrepreneurship Growth:** Many participants acquired foundational knowledge in **entrepreneurship**, which inspired some to launch small businesses or pursue self-employment. This directly contributed to **local economic development**.
- **Strengthened Community Engagement:** Participants, particularly volunteers and student groups, effectively leveraged their new skills to contribute to **community projects, peer mentoring, and local initiatives** focused on promoting education and digital literacy.
- **Gender Empowerment:** With significant female participation, the project actively fostered **greater gender equality** in access to technology and skills training. This encouraged women's more active involvement in economic activities, promoting inclusivity.
- **Expanded Digital Culture:** The project played a crucial role in cultivating a growing culture of **online learning and digital inclusion** across Ethiopia. This encouraged youth to increasingly adopt technology for both personal and professional development, moving the country forward.



Challenges Encountered

- The country team encountered **technical challenges** with the IBM SkillsBuild platform throughout the project, impacting the learner experience and program monitoring. **Platform accessibility issues** were faced, with frequent lagging during login and registration, alongside errors during account creation that hindered smooth onboarding. Learners also encountered **certificate generation delays**, sometimes waiting days or even never receiving certificates after course completion, despite prompts. **Dashboard and data update delays** meant key metrics, such as engaged learner counts, weren't reflected in real-time, complicating accurate reporting. The platform also experienced **system crashes and downtime**, particularly under high user loads.
- A significant challenge also emerged in **learner retention and engagement**, highlighted by a considerable **mismatch between the number of registered learners and those who completed courses**. This gap underscores the need to address factors beyond initial sign-up to ensure sustained participation and successful completion. The country team is actively collaborating with IAVE and the IBM team to adequately address these technical and platform challenges, striving for a more stable and user-friendly experience.

Recommendations

The following recommendations pertain both to the platform and technical issues as well as the in-country delivery of the program by IAVE:

- Improve platform speed and reduce errors
- Automate and speed up certificate generation
- Update dashboard data more frequently (daily)
- Continue to collaborate with IBM to address recurring technical issues
- Provide guides and tutorials in local languages
- Use peer mentors to support new learners
- Offer incentives to boost course completion
- Create a backup registration form to collect key demographics
- Train volunteers to verify and track learner data
- Strengthen partnerships with universities and youth networks



Learner Testimonial

The [Project Management Fundamentals] course taught me how to set realistic goals, manage team communication, and identify potential risks early. As a result, I became more confident in leading teams and delivering projects on time and within budget.

**– Raniya Nuredin Adem,
Student Learner, Ethiopia**



Lessons Learned

- **Telegram was the most effective mobilization tool:** High-traffic Telegram channels outperformed all other platforms in driving registrations, especially among urban youth.
- **Localized content boosted engagement:** Posts and instructions shared in **Amharic** significantly increased accessibility and learner trust.
- **Learner feedback revealed platform difficulties:** Some users reported challenges navigating the platform, prompting the team to provide **more hands-on guidance and peer support**.
- **Certificate issues created frustration:** Delays and failures in receiving certificates discouraged some learners from completing additional courses.
- **Retention was harder than anticipated:** While registrations were high, many learners dropped off midway, revealing the need for stronger follow-up and motivational strategies.
- **Volunteer networks were unexpectedly powerful:** University volunteers and youth groups played a critical role in mobilization and learner support, beyond what had originally been anticipated.

South Africa

Executive Summary

Country	South Africa
Submitted By	Lungelo Youth Development (LYD)
Reporting Period	November 7, 2024 - June 6, 2025
Project Title	IAVE-IBM Reskilling Revolution Africa (RRA) – SkillsBuild Pilot Project

Impact Summary

Quantitative (metrics from SkillsBuild platform)



Number of learners registered

14,709



Number of engaged learners (conversion rate of 54%)

8,262



Number of course completions

27,869



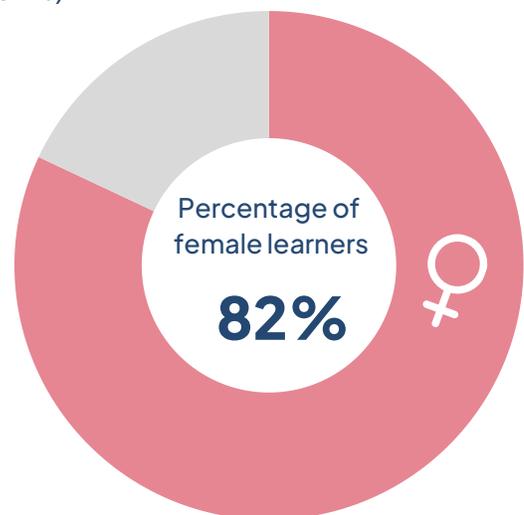
Number of learning hours

12,572



Number of digital credentials issued

255



Qualitative (metrics assessed by IAVE Country Implementation Partner)

The IAVE RRA IBM SkillsBuild Project for South Africa is a strategic initiative designed to empower young people by leveraging the power of volunteering to provide them with essential skills development and employment opportunities. This project specifically targets high-growth sectors: the digital and green economies. Through a comprehensive approach, it aims to equip South African youth with relevant, in-demand skills via the robust IBM SkillsBuild platform, ultimately fostering sustainable livelihoods and contributing to national economic growth. The project successfully completed the following outcomes:

- **Enhanced Employability:**
 - Increased access for youth to foundational and advanced skills in digital technologies (e.g., AI, cybersecurity, data science).
 - Development of specialized knowledge and practical skills relevant to the green economy (e.g., renewable energy, sustainable practices).
 - Improved readiness of participants to enter and succeed in jobs within these rapidly expanding sectors.
- **Sustainable Community Development:**
 - Creation of a supportive learning ecosystem through volunteer mentorship and guidance.
 - Bridging of the skills gap, addressing unemployment, and fostering economic inclusion among young South Africans.
 - Contribution to the overall development of a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and growth in key national industries.

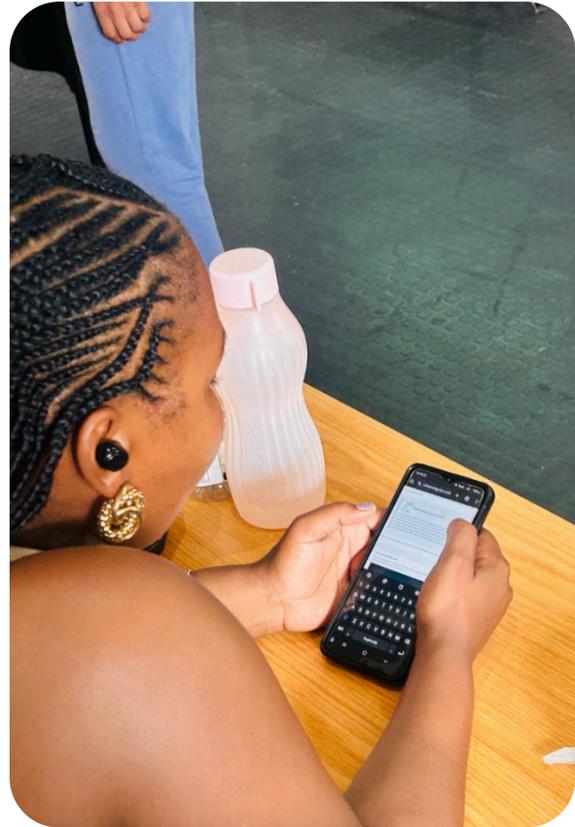
Popular Learning Courses and Learning Pathways:

- **Career Relaunch: Be an entrepreneur
Powered by NFTE**
- **Job Application Essentials**
- **Customer Engagement Fundamentals**
- **Web Development Fundamentals**
- **Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals**
- **Working in a Digital World:
Professional Skills**

Project Report – South Africa

Specific Objectives

- **Provide Access to Comprehensive Skills Development:**
 - To offer free and open-source skills training to thousands of young individuals through the IBM SkillsBuild platform, covering over 1,000 courses in technology, workforce readiness, professional development, entrepreneurship, and green skills.
 - To equip participants with globally recognized digital badges and certifications that validate their newly acquired competencies and enhance their marketability.
- **Facilitate Entry into Digital and Green Economy Employment:**
 - To connect learners with a network of IBM staff serving as volunteer mentors, providing guidance, support, and practical insights to aid their career development.
 - To increase the employability of youth by aligning skills training with the specific demands of the digital economy (e.g., AI, cybersecurity, data analytics) and the burgeoning green economy (e.g., renewable energy, sustainable practices), leading to meaningful job opportunities.



Key Activities During Reporting Period

- **Marketing and Promotion of IBM SkillsBuild:** This involved a concerted effort to raise awareness about the IBM SkillsBuild platform and its benefits. Activities likely included developing promotional materials, conducting information sessions, and utilizing various communication channels to reach potential learners and stakeholders. The goal was to clearly articulate the value proposition of the platform in terms of skills development and employment opportunities.
- **Community Entry and Engagement with Traditional Leadership:** A crucial step involved engaging with traditional leadership structures, specifically local chiefs, to gain access to the community's youth. This was vital for establishing trust and securing their endorsement for the initiative. By involving local leaders, the project aimed to ensure community buy-in, facilitate the identification of potential participants, and smoothly introduce the IBM SkillsBuild program as a beneficial opportunity for their young people.
- **Facilitating Workshops Referencing IBM SkillsBuild Pathways:** Practical workshops were conducted to guide participants through the diverse learning pathways available on the IBM SkillsBuild platform. These workshops likely provided an overview of different career tracks, helped learners identify suitable courses based on their interests and career aspirations, and demonstrated how to navigate the platform effectively. This hands-on guidance was essential for demystifying the online learning environment and empowering learners to take ownership of their education.
- **Learner Support Initiatives:** Recognizing the potential challenges of online learning, the project implemented various support mechanisms to assist students with their courses. This could have included setting up help desks, providing technical assistance, organizing study groups, or offering mentorship from volunteers. The aim was to ensure that learners received the necessary assistance to overcome obstacles, stay motivated, and successfully complete their chosen courses.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Throughout the piloting phase, continuous monitoring and evaluation activities were conducted. This involved systematically tracking progress, gathering feedback from participants and stakeholders, and assessing the effectiveness of the implemented activities. The data collected from monitoring and evaluation was crucial for identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, allowing for iterative adjustments to the program design and ensuring its efficiency and impact as it scales up.

Targeted Location in South Africa & Number of Communities Reached

- **KwaZulu-Natal Province:** Eight (8) communities were reached in this province. This extensive reach in KwaZulu-Natal likely allowed for a significant concentration of efforts and potentially a deeper penetration into different types of communities, from urban to more rural settings, within the region.
- **Mpumalanga Province:** Two (2) communities in Mpumalanga Province benefited from the project. While fewer in number compared to KwaZulu-Natal, these communities still represent a valuable expansion of the program's footprint into another key South African province.
- **Gauteng Province:** Three (3) communities in Gauteng Province were engaged. As Gauteng is a major economic hub, reaching communities here would have provided opportunities to connect with youth in a highly industrialized and digitally connected environment.

Human Resources and Support

- **Project Staff:** Project Coordinator, Finance and Admin, M&E Officer
- **Volunteers:** Varied as per situation; however average was 9 volunteers
- **Facilitators/Trainers:** Varied as per situation; however average was 7 facilitators

Number of Youth Mobilized

- 14,709



Learner Testimonial

IBM SkillsBuild was a great asset to me since I am an academic support program facilitator. I was able to integrate the courses into the session we have with learners and leveled up their knowledge of various tech topics.

**– Amahle Maphumulo,
Academic Support
Program Facilitator,
South Africa**



Mobilization Strategies Employed

NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) Strategy: For young people classified as NEETs, the project focused on creating an **enabling learning environment** at the Lungelo Youth Development Safespace. Instead of relying on broad marketing, resources were invested in tangible support. Key elements included:

- **Dedicated Learning Hub:** The Safespace was transformed into a **Wi-Fi hotspot exclusively for IBM SkillsBuild courses**, removing internet access as a barrier. This provided a consistent, free, and conducive environment for learning.
- **Blended Learning & Engagement:** The center fostered an atmosphere that blended **education with entertainment**. By integrating fun games and activities alongside the learning, the project aimed to make the experience enjoyable and encourage consistent attendance.
- **Word-of-Mouth Mobilization:** This positive and engaging environment naturally led to **peer-to-peer recruitment**. Satisfied participants, often referred to as being part of a "movement," actively encouraged their friends and neighbors to join, proving to be a highly effective and organic mobilization method.

TVET Colleges and Universities Strategy: The project recognized the potential for students already in higher education to benefit from additional skills. The strategy here addressed engagement challenges by:

- **Targeting Supplementary Skills:** The initiative positioned IBM SkillsBuild as an opportunity for TVET and university students to **acquire new, complementary skills** that could enhance their existing studies or open doors to entirely new career paths.
- **Implementing Group Learning Sessions:** To counter the common issue of individuals registering but not completing courses, the project introduced **group learning sessions**. This collaborative approach fostered peer support and accountability, significantly boosting engagement and completion rates.
- **Incentivized Peer Mobilizers:** Participants who completed at least five courses were identified and trained as **mobilizers**. These individuals were then compensated (monetarily and with incentives like movie tickets, meal vouchers, and mobile data) to encourage their peers to register and actively participate, creating a powerful internal recruitment and retention mechanism.

Number of Engaged Learners

8,262

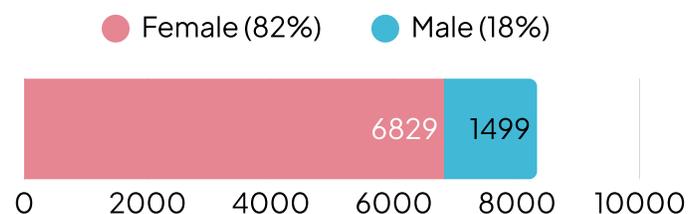
Number of Digital Credentials Issued

255

Popular Learning Courses and Learning Pathways

- Career Relaunch: Be an entrepreneur Powered by NFTE
- Job Application Essentials
- Customer Engagement Fundamentals
- Web Development Fundamentals
- Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals
- Working in a Digital World: Professional Skills

Gender Disaggregation



Direct Impacts

The IAVE RRA SkillsBuild project, in collaboration with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, has demonstrated a significant and measurable impact on the employment prospects of its participants. This partnership has facilitated the recruitment of numerous IBM SkillsBuild alumni who successfully completed professional skills courses.

This successful recruitment signifies the program's effectiveness in bridging the skills gap and preparing individuals for the workforce. Key indicators of this project's impact include:

- **Employment Rate of Alumni:** The most direct indicator is the **percentage of IBM SkillsBuild alumni** who secured employment, particularly those who completed professional skills courses, after participating in the program.

- **Relevance of Skills Acquired:** The fact that alumni were "recruited" suggests that the **skills gained through the IBM SkillsBuild professional courses directly aligned with the requirements of employers**. This indicates the high quality and market relevance of the training provided.
- **Partnership Effectiveness:** The success in recruitment, specifically through the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, serves as an indicator of the **strength and efficacy of the strategic partnership** in translating training into tangible job outcomes.
- **Sector-Specific Impact:** This success points to a positive impact within the education sector (and potentially broader public sector employment) in KwaZulu-Natal, showcasing the program's ability to address **specific workforce needs** within a particular region or industry.

Indirect Impacts

The IAVE RRA SkillsBuild project has yielded a significant indirect impact by profoundly shifting the educational perspectives and aspirations of participating youth. Beyond simply acquiring new skills, students have developed a broader and more adaptable view of learning and career pathways.

This transformative impact is evident in several ways:

- **Diversification of Educational Approach:** Participants no longer view traditional education as the sole means of advancement. They now understand and actively seek out "further education training" and leverage platforms like IBM SkillsBuild to either supplement their formal studies or pursue entirely new learning trajectories. This indicates a significant shift towards embracing lifelong learning and non-traditional educational resources.
- **Awareness of the Digital Future:** The program successfully opened the eyes of young people to the undeniable trend of global digitalization. By exposing them to the "endless possibilities" within the digital economy, IBM SkillsBuild instilled a critical awareness of the necessity of digital literacy. This is particularly impactful given the socio-economic conditions of many learners, suggesting that the program provided not just skills, but also crucial foresight and a sense of agency in a rapidly changing world. This broadened perspective empowers them to navigate future challenges and opportunities more effectively, reducing reliance on limited traditional job markets.

Challenges Encountered

- The country team faced technical challenges with the IBM SkillsBuild platform throughout the project, impacting the learner experience and overall program efficacy. Key among these were system downtime and login issues, which caused occasional platform failures and disrupted learners' access. There was a noticeable mismatch between the number of registered learners and those who completed courses, indicating that learner retention and engagement on the platform remained a significant concern. The country team is actively engaged in ongoing collaboration with both IAVE and the IBM team to adequately address these persistent technical and platform challenges, working towards a more stable, accessible, and user-friendly experience that fosters higher completion rates.
- However, the initiative also encountered challenges related to in-country skills build delivery that go beyond the platform itself. Limited access to smartphones and the internet proved to be a major barrier for some targeted youth, making it difficult for them to enroll and consistently participate in the program. Additionally, visual learners requiring facilitator support faced difficulties attending physical sessions due to transport constraints, highlighting a logistical hurdle in providing comprehensive hands-on guidance. To mitigate these in-country challenges, the existing collaboration with local partners and IAVE's broader ecosystem of delivery partners is crucial, with ongoing efforts to raise additional funding to support initiatives that bridge the digital divide and provide localized support.

Recommendations

The project's impact is evident in its success in placing alumni in jobs, especially through a partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Beyond direct employment, it has fostered a crucial shift in learners' mindsets, encouraging them to embrace continuous, non-traditional education and recognize the critical importance of digital skills in a rapidly evolving world. To sustain and expand its reach, the project should implement actionable strategies like establishing mobile learning groups, facilitating device sharing at safe spaces, and empowering local facilitators, all while collaborating closely with IAVE and IBM to address ongoing challenges.





Learner Testimonial

IBM SkillsBuild completely changed my life. As someone who couldn't afford formal university studies, I found their free courses in cybersecurity and cloud computing incredibly valuable.

- Bayanda Myeni, Youth Learner, South Africa

Lessons Learned

- The IAVE RRA SkillsBuild project gained valuable insights into effective community engagement, particularly regarding mobilization strategies. A key lesson learned was the **limited efficacy of digital marketing** in converting interest into actual student enrollment. Despite seeing engagement with online campaigns on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, these interactions didn't translate into a proportional number of new IBM SkillsBuild students. This highlighted a significant disconnect between digital visibility and tangible participation, suggesting that for this target demographic, online presence alone isn't enough to drive enrollment.
- Conversely, the project discovered the immense power of **peer-to-peer mobilization and trust-based recruitment**. By establishing study groups and incentivizing those who completed courses to encourage their friends to join, the project found a highly effective pathway to enrollment. This strategy capitalized on existing social networks and the credibility of successful participants, demonstrating that direct, personal recommendations and the leveraging of established trust were far more impactful in attracting new learners than broad digital outreach. This emphasizes the importance of community-led growth and the value of human connection in driving program participation.

About IAVE



International
Association for
Volunteer
Effort

Since 1970, IAVE has nurtured and grown volunteer leaders across the world, promoting the ideas and values of volunteering as the foundation of civil society. Our diverse member network includes volunteers, government agencies, multi-national agencies and institutions, academics, NGOs, businesses, and volunteer leadership organizations in over 100 countries.

The key areas of IAVE's work include **advocacy, thought leadership, leadership development and convening** to recognize, support and develop volunteering globally.

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