

Ajgunle.org

Changing Ajgunle, 25 Youths at a Time

THE BEGINNING

Ajgunle is a notorious slum in Lagos, Nigeria, and home to over three (3) million inhabitants from



all the tribes of West Africa. A long-time resident describes Ajgunle as: *“a place where you watch your back, and keep at the survival game”*. While the name Ajgunle usually evokes thoughts of poverty and crime, the real meaning of the community’s name is “residence of wealth” or “a land of commerce”. However, the only near-sign of this meaningful name is the few (very few, actually) young

people who have developed thriving musical or football careers in spite of the harsh living conditions. A community worker who has reinvested much of his time towards youth development in the community is usually quick to mention the high level of prostitution and other social vices that majority of the Ajgunle youth population are exposed to.

PARADIGM INITIATIVE NIGERIA’S INTEREST

Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN), which started in 2001 as an online volunteer team with the main objective of connecting Nigerian youths with ICT opportunities, is a social enterprise seeking to help deliver ICT for socio-economic opportunities in Nigeria. Having worked with government, civil society, private institutions and international organisations, PIN has set standards in ICT education, telecentre support, ICT applications in rural areas, and other ICT4D interventions in Nigeria. PIN’s expertise includes Consulting, ICT capacity building, Research, Youth-led Social Technopreneurship and Telecenter Support. Following an earlier meeting opportunity with the community, PIN now focuses on exploring the use of Information and Communication Technologies and Entrepreneurship to improve the livelihoods of young people in Ajgunle - through relay training and the promotion of positive peer pressure.



PROJECT VISION

The vision of **Ajgunle.org** is: “A new *Ajgunle*, transformed through the application of *Information Communications Technology and Entrepreneurship opportunities*; creating role models that will drive socio-economic development in the underserved community.”

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

While the overall objective of **Ajgunle.org** is to create better livelihoods through ICT opportunities, the project’s specific objectives include:



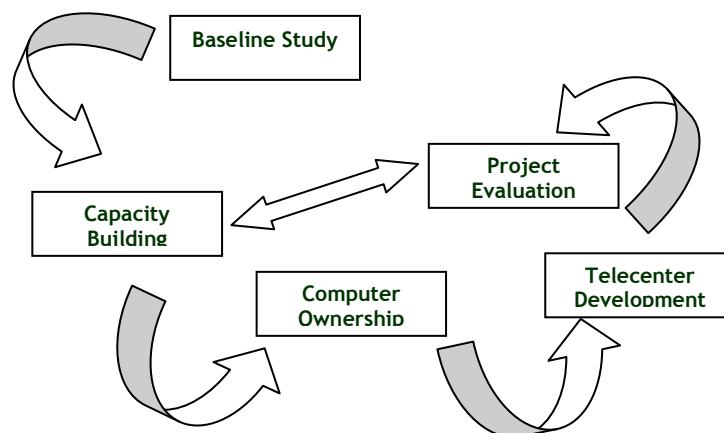
(a) Capacity building for 25 trainees every other month. These youth will be equipped with ICT and Entrepreneurship skills which they will then pass on to other youth, along with starting their own business;

(b) Community PC Ownership scheme that will provide an opportunity for trainees to acquire personal computers for

their personal development and business needs;

(c) Telecentre development which will explore a sustainable telecentre model (built through the collective effort of project graduates, PIN and the community) that will provide ICT opportunities, and will be easily replicable in other locations.

The project’s sustainability model includes the delivery of capacity building sessions through volunteers, such as the role that the *Korean Internet Volunteers* (supported by the *Korean Agency for Digital Opportunities and Promotion*) played in the first cycle of the program. The model also allows students to join the program at no cost but they are expected to return **10% of their business profit** to the project after completing the program. They are also expected to earn money from the training of at least five (5) youth within their community as second-level trainees of the **Ajgunle.org** project. In addition to this, each trainee is expected to **save 20%** of their profit towards the acquisition of personal computers.



Ajgunle.org
Project Cycle

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Building on the partnership between *Uncommon Man Network* (a non-profit organization based in Ajegunle) and *Paradigm Initiative Nigeria*, we conducted a baseline study that helped us feel the pulse of the intended beneficiaries. Feedback from the research provided us with content with which a training curriculum was developed. Twenty-five (25) pioneer trainees were then selected for the first stage of **Ajgunle.org** Capacity Building exercise.



The ICT capacity building session that held between July 30, 2007 and August 10, 2007 equipped the twenty-five first-level trainees with basic ICT skills including the mastery of spreadsheets and graphic design tools. During the training on Entrepreneurship, which held from August 16 - 31, 2007, the trainees were guided through the practical process of business plan development including Introduction to Entrepreneurship; Defining Your Business; Marketing; Staffing & Finances; Social Impact, Timelines, and Risk Management; Finding Resources on the Web and Discussing Your Plans with Others.

Their business ideas were drawn from the *Shine Your Eye* exercise which required them to open their eyes to (and explore) business opportunities that provide solutions to problems in their communities. Prior to the commencement of the training, an orientation session was organised for the trainees, to help them develop a proper understanding of the project. The session also featured an interactive session between trainees and experts in Public Administration, ICTs, and other disciplines. To emphasize the project's mentorship and positive peer pressure tilt, we invited a young professional who grew up in Ajegunle to emphasize that growing up in Ajegunle does not limit their future possibilities. During the course of their capacity building exercise, trainees also met staff of various institutions including TakingITGlobal (Canada), Computer Aid International (Kenya) and Trade and Investment, UK Deputy High Commission, Lagos.

Trainees were also selected and sponsored to attend various networking events which included the



International Youth Day Networking Session facilitated by PIN and Nigeria Professionals (NIPRO). At the end of the training, three graduates were offered internship opportunities with Afrinvest West Africa and Trade and Investment, UK Deputy High Commission, Lagos. The project was officially presented to the public on September 20, 2007, at an high-level event hosted by Trade and Investment, UK Deputy High Commission, Lagos.

Following the model of the project, students have commenced the training five (5) second-level trainees, along with establishing their own businesses. The project report that will be published in

December will highlight details of the trainees' second-level training (and any third-level training that might have been held) and progress made with their businesses. All the trainees have responded to this training opportunity with one phrase.

PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

PIN understands the power of partnerships, hence our early collaboration with the *Uncommon Man Network* as a partner with expertise in the project community. We are also grateful to *UK Trade & Investment* for the internship opportunity for two trainees and hosting the project's public presentation, and *Afrinvest West Africa* for the internship opportunity for an additional project trainees.



FATE Foundation has agreed to provide additional entrepreneurship training to the project graduates through 10 training slots in their dynamic program every year while *Hands on Institute of Information Technology (HiIT) Limited* supported the project with an early cash gift and additional IT training (of choice) for all project graduates. *Success Attitude Development Centre* hosted the last day of entrepreneurship training, *Junior Achievement of Nigeria* will train project graduates in money management through their highly successful *MyMoneyBiz* program, *Teledom International* will support the project's telecentre through the provision of Internet access (and will support the next capacity building cycle), *Korean Agency for Digital Opportunities and Promotion* provided four Volunteers (KIVs) who led the ICT training sessions, and we continue to enjoy support from media institutions including *Sun Newspapers*, *Leadership Newspapers*, *Daily Independent*, *Guardian Newspapers*, *Nigeria International* and the *Nigerian Television Authority*.

NEXT STEPS

Following the completion of two major stages of the *Ajgunle.org* project (baseline study and capacity building), the project implementation continues with the following action steps:



(a) **Website Upgrade:** Improving the present features to include database-driven profile pages for the trainees, to ensure continued tracking of their progress;

(b) **Evaluation:** Monthly reports from graduates, feedback from the community, profile pages on the project website, post

training monitoring and discussions on the graduates' mailing list;

(c) **Partnerships:** Developing partnerships for facility, resource and training support, including joint project engagement;

- (d) **Next Cycle:** Selection and training for the next cycle of the capacity building segment of Ajegunle.org will be between October and December 2007;
- (e) **Town Hall Meeting:** In November 2007, we will host an Ajegunle Town Hall Meeting where we will announce and call for community support towards the project and the first telecenter;
- (f) **PC Acquisition:** We expect this to take off in January 2008, following successful business reports from the first set of graduates;
- (g) **Telecenter Development:** By June 2008, PIN expects the first telecentre to commence operations, with key support from the graduates, the community and our other partners;
- (h) **Project Sustainability, Documentation and Replication:** PIN will continue to work with other partners to track the project's progress while finalising work on the project's sustainability. With a successful model, PIN will make project documentation ("Community.org-in-a-Box") available to - and work together with - other communities for possible project replication;
- (i) **Project Multimedia Report:** PIN will, in December 2007, publish a multimedia report on the project. This multimedia report will showcase the graduates who have improved their lives (along with that of their dependents and communities), project partners and supporters, and the future direction of the project. This provides an opportunity for individuals and corporate institutions to become part of the New Ajegunle success story, from the beginning!

CONCLUSION

The completion of the project's first two phases (baseline study and capacity building), and the first capacity building cycle, points to how much work can be done through the carefully thought-out (and continuously developed) project model. Feedback from various stages of the project implementation will be fed into the project delivery circle to ensure increased efficiency. At the rate of twenty-five young people at a time, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and our partners are set to reveal the other side of Ajegunle - unveiling the real meaning of the community's name.



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