

Digital Divide Data (DDD)

SNAPSHOT	
Organization(s)	Digital Divide Data (DDD)
Project Name	n/a
Location	Kenya
Date(s) of Implementation	September 1, 2013 – October 31, 2015
Funding Amount	USD 2,500,000
Partner(s) / Funder(s)	The Rockefeller Foundation’s Digital Jobs Africa (DJA) Initiative
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Trained	Total: 900 Women: 450 Men: 450
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Employed	Total: 900 Women: 450 Men: 450
Avg. Monthly Earnings of the Youth Beneficiaries after Program	USD 449
Type(s) of Digital Work	Online Outsourcing – Microwork
Source of Metrics	Internal monitoring & evaluation

ABOUT DIGITAL DIVIDE DATA

Established in 2001, Digital Data Divide (DDD) is an innovative social enterprise. DDD recruits and trains youth to work as DDD data management operators (DMOs) to deliver business process outsourcing (BPO) services to their clients. In doing so, DDD provides youth with the relevant skills needed to further their careers and offers youth support for higher education. DDD was one of the pioneers of impact sourcing (IS) and has supported the launch and growth of other IS companies and the sector more broadly by disseminating their learnings and experiences with other IS organizations.

DDD’s model is based on impact sourcing, through which it employs people in developing countries to provide high-quality digital content services to local and international businesses. The DDD recruitment and hiring model has several phases:

- Phase 1: Basic Training.** DDD recruits youth from disadvantaged areas to undergo business education, soft skills and technical skills training to develop the computer and English skills required to work in DDD. More specifically, the training provides beneficiaries with client-specific microwork skills as well as other technical skills such as Microsoft Office applications, Google search, computer networking, hardware maintenance and troubleshooting. Soft skills training includes communication, analytical skills, problem solving and time management. The training is a combination of in classroom face-to-face learning (70%) and online learning (30%). This provides the youth with the flexibility to complete assignments according to their own schedules, while also developing team and communication skills.

- Phase 2: Work-readiness Training.** When basic training is complete, DDD hires those who show promise, who then spend an additional three months in a work readiness training program, where after they are placed in a job for nine months of contracted work where they earn a living wage. During this period, beneficiaries also receive career guidance. In these placements, beneficiaries work six hours a day performing digital work for local and global clients.
- Phase 3: Work + Higher Education.** After this year-long probation period, beneficiaries have the opportunity to start higher education, whereby DDD structures their work schedule to allow for further study. The beneficiaries pay a portion of their tuition from their own earnings while the other portion is funded through partial scholarships and loan programs from institutions such as the Kenyan Government’s Higher Education Loans Board (HELB)⁴. DDD has partnered with the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University to enroll beneficiaries⁴. These degrees are typically earned in four years. Common degrees pursued by beneficiaries are those centered around accounting and finance, investment, entrepreneurship and innovation.

As beneficiaries prepare to graduate from university, DDD supports them with their job search, including CV writing and interview skills. Additionally, a select group of high-performance staff are promoted internally.

The DJA grant was used to scale up DDD’s delivery center in Kenya such that they could increase their number of employees by over 900 to employ a total of 6,000 employees in Kenya.

PROJECT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Program Design	Supply-Side Components		Demand-Side Components	
	Training & Skills Development	✓	Improving Access to Finance for SMEs	×
Employment & Intermediation Services	✓	Capacity Building & Information Provision	×	
Subsidized Employment	×	Targeted Sector-Specific Approaches	✓	

RECRUITMENT

50%
of beneficiaries
were women

10%
of beneficiaries were
persons with disabilities

DDD targets youth from 18 to 24 who were born into disadvantaged families and are first time job seekers. DDD also aims for 10% of their workforce to include people with disabilities. However, there is no indication of how this is specifically targeted. DDD believes in equal opportunity for women in the workplace and, by creating an environment that was accommodating to women’s needs, they ensure that 50% of the youth hired as associates are young women. DDD is able to achieve this by having their staff

proactivity reach out to young women in the community.⁷ Other targeting criteria included rural and urban slum dwellers and orphans.

DDD partners with secondary schools, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and financial and health institutions which serve the youth. Through this engagement, DDD can identify motivated high school graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds. A key element of the recruitment process is a home visit to ensure that the youth really come from disadvantaged families. During the home visit, DDD's field workers also explain how the program works to the beneficiaries' families to ensure that they understand the program and can adequately support the beneficiaries. Having family support and the necessary support systems in place is key to the success of youth's employment. Often the process is unfamiliar to the youth and requires additional support from family members to ensure that this is sustained.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The primary challenge faced by DDD is the funding of university degrees. Initially, DDD received loans from the government. However, this source of funding was identified as being unsustainable. As such, DDD looked for partners who could provide scholarships to beneficiaries. In doing so, DDD identified a company called KIVA that administers loans to beneficiaries.

Another challenge faced by DDD is that the lack of understanding of their business model by the public. Many people incorrectly believed that DDD was a university, as opposed to a youth-focused business. As a result, many young people who applied to the program believed that they would be offered the opportunity to study further immediately without understanding that the program comprised of both work and study components. To address this, DDD reinforced the work element of the program in their messaging during recruitment.

Competition within the impact sourcing industry is an additional challenge faced by DDD. Confronted with increasing competition, during the project period, DDD was unable to retain a major client due to changes in the bidding procedure in August 2015. As a result, DDD was unable to renew some short-term contracts with youth beneficiaries beyond August 2015 and the recruitment and hiring of new beneficiaries was stalled until this client's work could be replaced.

BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCES

"I'm from a humble background. After high school, I could not afford the fee to go to university. My family could not support me and I don't have parents. But I always wanted to go to university and earn a degree so I could pursue my goals and ambitions."

DDD female beneficiary, Kenya

Program staff reported that beneficiaries found the biggest impact on their lives to be the opportunity to further their studies. Many of the youth beneficiaries could not afford to go to university, thus this program was significant in presenting this opportunity to disadvantaged beneficiaries.

Another considerable impact of the program on the lives of the youth was the chance to learn how to use and work on a computer. Most beneficiaries had either had a limited interaction or had never used a computer before. After the training their computer literacy skills improved, which they felt could be used to grow their careers in the future. The combination of work experience and university qualifications was found to open doors for DDD beneficiaries and over 80% of beneficiaries were employed after the program.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Based on DDD's internal monitoring data, over **900 youth were provided with long term employment opportunities** (e.g. opportunities that last for four years or more), across the countries where DDD operates and 670 youth graduated with university degrees over the period of the DJA grant. 50% of the beneficiaries who participated in the program and were supported with scholarships were young women and 10% were people with disabilities.¹

USD 449
average
monthly wage

USD 110,000
estimated increase in
lifetime earnings

Drawing on DDD's impact measurement system,² which assesses beneficiaries and graduates on an annual basis and conducts evaluations of impact, DDD beneficiaries' average monthly wage was USD 449 upon graduating with a university degree. Additionally, the estimated increase in lifetime earnings of DDD graduates was USD 110,000.³

DDD's work-study program was well received by beneficiaries and was found to subsequently change the trajectory of their lives, as shown in the box below. The majority of DDD beneficiaries accessed their first jobs through the DDD impact sourcing program. Beneficiaries typically worked four to five years at DDD, earning a living wage while working towards a university degree. As a result of the income received from DDD, beneficiaries were able to move out of their family homes and support themselves, often in more urban cities. They were able to pay bills, renovate family homes, send siblings to school and pay for family healthcare. Additionally, the opportunity to obtain a tertiary education provided DDD beneficiaries the

¹ Digital Divide Data (2016). *Annual Report*. Nairobi, Kenya: Digital Divide Data.

<https://www.digitaldividedata.com/sites/default/files/DDD's%202016%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

² Ibid.

³ Income estimates are based on actual income of DDD graduates since 2006 with an estimated real increase in income for future years.

⁴ Business Call to Action Alliance (2016). *Building Future Markets*. New York, NY: Business Call to Action Alliance. Available at: http://www.businesscalltoaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/BCTA_Building-Future-Markets-Final.pdf.

⁵ Missika B. and Fiedler A. (2017). "Empowering youth through digital jobs: How innovative approaches are creating opportunities for disadvantaged youth." *Huffpost*. Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/empowering-youth-through_b_4276931.html.

⁶ <https://www.digitaldividedata.com/impact/impact-sourcing>.

⁷ <https://www.digitaldividedata.com/impact/ddd-recruitment>.

ability to differentiate themselves from other young people in the market, thus increasing their chances of entering full time employment when they graduated.



Upon graduating with a university degree, approximately 70% of the beneficiaries secured full-time employment in the private sector, NGO's or government agencies. The majority of DDD beneficiaries accessed jobs in existing firms, with 17% of them in IT and communications, 12% in business services, 13% in banking and finance and 10% in retail. Once in full-time employment, DDD beneficiaries were often presented opportunities to move up the career ladder, and occupied middle-top positions in IT companies and other organizations.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. A high rate of pregnancy resulted in a high drop-out rate among female participants.** Additionally, where these women remained in the program, they would take maternity leave for three months, and upon their return, they would struggle to catch up with the rest of the program. To address this problem, DDD added family planning into the training which was available to all recruits and saw a significant decrease in the pregnancy rate of female recruits.
- 2. Many beneficiaries found the work at DDD to be repetitive and unstimulating, particularly those tasks associated with data entry, data verification and transcription.** As a result, beneficiaries were prone to leaving their job at DDD for a slight increase in their salary at other organizations, which resulted in a high turnover rate for the DDD. At the end of the grant period, DDD started investigating and pursuing cloud-based services to address this concern as these services are more complex and require a higher level of skills, with the expectation that they would thus be more likely to improve retention and enhance DDD's workforce development efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Digital jobs programs with models similar to DDD should use their organization's reputation in the Impact Sourcing space to identify new market opportunities, such as cloud services, and to capitalize on the demand for higher level skills to enhance workforce development efforts.** The web or cloud computing services industry is an opportunity that digital jobs programs can leverage as these services are high-demand, scalable, and executable from remote offices. This requires that digital jobs programs establish relationships with organizations that require these higher skill services and ensure that they have the skills to meet these demands.
- 2. Digital jobs programs should continue to pursue more measures to strengthen, streamline, and scale their impact through employment and education.** Opportunities for quality alternatives to higher education, including distance learning and vocational training are now available and programs should incorporate these options to provide beneficiaries with a more holistic and practical range of education options that will maximize their learning and career opportunities.