

Samasource

SNAPSHOT	
Organization(s)	Samasource
Project Name	N/A
Location	Kenya
Date(s) of Implementation	Phase 1: August 1, 2009 – January 31, 2010 Phase 2: October 1, 2010 – March 31, 2012 Phase 3: November 1, 2014 – December 31, 2015
Funding Amount	Phase 1: USD 67,900 Phase 2: USD 799,200 Phase 3: USD 750,000
Partner(s)	The Rockefeller Foundation’s Digital Jobs Africa (DJA) Initiative
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Trained	Total: 8,398 Women: N/A Men: N/A
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Employed	Total: 6,718 Women: N/A Men: N/A
Avg. Monthly Earnings of Youth Beneficiaries after Program	USD 1,714
Type(s) of Digital Work	Online Outsourcing – Microwork Online Outsourcing – Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)
Source of Metrics	Internal monitoring & evaluation Mid-term evaluation

ABOUT SAMASOURCE

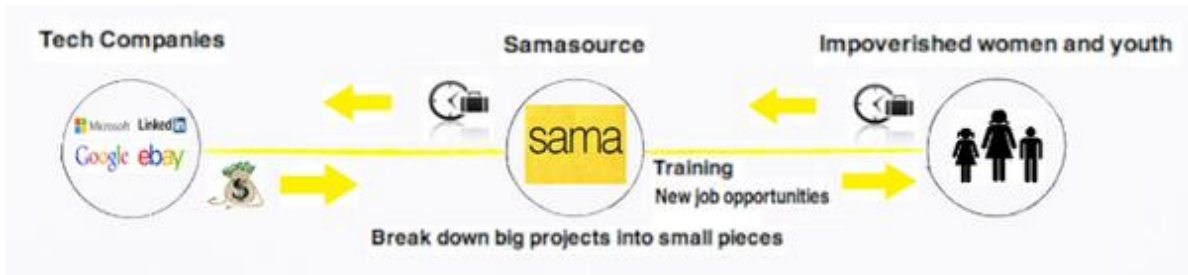
Samasource aims to address the challenges associated with youth employment by equipping unemployed youth with market-aligned skills and a direct connection to employers. The components of the Samasource model include:

- Skills Development:** The first component of the program is focused on skills development where beneficiaries are trained on the fundamentals of digital literacy, as well as market-aligned occupational skills required by employers. This program is known as Samasource Digital Basics. Beneficiaries attend class 6 hours a day for 10 days. The program covers basic digital skills, occupational skills, and job search preparation.
- Job search coaching:** Beneficiaries are coached on creating a professional CV and receive intensive job search preparation through mock interviews and coaching.
- Employer connections:** Upon completion of the Samasource Digital Basics program, beneficiaries are connected to job opportunities both at Samasource and their network of hiring partners, called delivery centers. At Samasource, the beneficiaries would complete projects that include

image tagging, image annotation, data classification, or dataset creation for machine learning algorithms.

Beneficiaries hired by Samasource are employed to conduct microtasks for global companies. This work is digitally-based and typically does not necessitate that employees possess complex, digital skills. Samasource microwork can be classified into three categories: content generation,¹ data enrichment² and transcription services.³

FIGURE 1 Samasource’s Business Model



Source: www.samasource.org.

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	✓

ACTIVITIES

The DJA grant was used to fund the following activities:

- Engagement with the Global Impact Sourcing Coalition (GISC) to help drive progress with GISC recruitment.⁴

¹ Editing or abstracting existing content to increase search relevance.

² Gathering reliable information and images for specialized datasets.

³ Transcribing and tagging audio and video files for high accuracy.

⁴ The Global Impact Sourcing Coalition is a forum of organizations committed to incorporating and scaling impact sourcing as a business strategy. Members of the coalition advocate for inclusive employment practices and aim to demonstrate how impact sourcing leads to business growth and employee diversity and engagement.

- Increase impact beneficiaries in Africa with new Fortune 500 clients and renewals of existing Fortune 500 clients.
- Social impact measurement services to organizations.

The Samasource Digital Basics program offered three routes to employment. First, Samasource hired beneficiaries directly in its own delivery centres. Second, graduates of the Samasource program were given preferential opportunities to be hired by partner delivery centres. Lastly, graduates were directed to online courses to become self-employed digital microworkers. Through these approaches, Samasource played a key role in facilitating beneficiaries' obtaining first time work experience and therefore entry into the labor market.

To retain as many beneficiaries in the program as possible, Samasource provided the following services:

- **Free childcare services during class hours.** Many of the beneficiaries were mothers or single parents. Without these resources, many of the beneficiaries would not have been able to come to class^{5,6}.
- **Free professional attire for job interviews.** Many of the beneficiaries did not have the appropriate attire for job interviews nor did they have the funds to buy professional clothes. Samasource ensured that everyone was able to attend interviews wearing appropriate clothing.^{5,6}
- **Provided Travel Stipends.** Many of the beneficiaries could not afford to travel to many interviews. Samasource covered their expense so they could attend the interviews.^{7,8}
- **Professional Mentorship.** Every student is matched with a mentor who supports the student as they transition to employment. This ensures that the student has a successful experience as they find a new job⁶.

As part of their work with scaling impact sourcing under the DJA grant, Samasource provided the following services to organizations engaged in impact sourcing:

- **Impact Sourcing with BPO training and set-up.** Samasource assisted organizations across multiple regions interested in bringing impact sourcing to a target population where there was an established BPO presence. Samasource evaluated the baseline skills of the potential beneficiaries, and assessed local and online job opportunities. Where the baseline skills met their requirements and the job opportunities were sufficiently available, Samasource assisted organizations to establish operations that utilized an impact sourcing approach.
- **Measurement and Evaluation (M&E) Guidance and Reporting.** Samasource assisted companies interested in tracking and expanding impact sourcing within their organization by helping them to develop and implement their M&E frameworks and systems.
- **Online Freelance training.** Samasource provided a web-based curriculum via the Internet on global freelancing. This was provided to organizations that represent individuals with marketable skills who live in regions that lack suitable job opportunities.

⁵ Schoar A. and Atkin D. (n.d.). *The Impact of a Tech-Centered Vocational Training and Employment Program for Youth in Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: Innovations for Poverty Action. Available at: <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/impact-tech-centered-vocational-training-and-employment-program-youth-kenya>.

⁶ <https://www.samasource.org/training>.

⁷ Schoar A. and Atkin D. (n.d.)

⁸ <https://www.samasource.org/training>.

RECRUITMENT

Samasource beneficiaries are targeted based on their income, employment status, educational background and, in Kenya, whether they live in a designated area of need. For the DJA project, Samasource used the following targeting criteria for their beneficiaries:

- Earning below the living wage in the informal economy. Samasource determined the living wage to be USD 8.00 a day.
- With little or no formal employment experience
- Possessed a command of verbal and written English. This was determined by the completion of a short qualification test.

Samasource targets beneficiaries through a multi-step process.

- First, beneficiaries are referred to Samasource through local community-based organizations, government organizations, schools and other NGOs. Radio advertisements and flyers are also used to attract beneficiaries.
- Applicants then take a self-administered screening survey that generates an impact score, which Samasource uses to determine eligibility for the impact sourcing program.
- Applicants who match the target population characteristics undertake a written skills test and have a face-to-face interview.

Based on the impact score, written skills test and interview, applicants are accepted into the program. To ensure gender balance in recruitment, Samasource sets a recruitment criterion with a target of 50% female recruits to all delivery centers. In 2016, 76% of new beneficiaries had little or no income, 70% were unemployed or underemployed, 46% had little formal computer experience and 49% were female.

Samasource's participant engagement and retention was high for the duration of the DJA project. The average annual tenure at Samasource was approximately 12 months over the project period and the program experienced an increase to the number of individuals employed over the period.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Beneficiaries had built up the expectation that attending the training would automatically result in them getting a job post the training. Samasource thus had to review all messaging related to this to make it clear that, in some cases, the beneficiaries would need to find their own opportunities. Not being placed in a job immediately after the training was otherwise found to cause the youth becoming discouraged and disheartened.

Had a wide variety of participants including primary dropouts. The primary dropouts had no English skills and had never seen a computer. This led to an 80% failure rate in the first cohort. Samasource decided to screen their applicants in addition to their application form. The results later improved, as all of the new beneficiaries could speak English and were able to complete their tasks.

BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCES

Samasource's baseline and follow-up surveys found that female beneficiaries were comparatively less confident than their male counterparts when they started the program and often did not engage openly during the training. However, the open, participatory approach used during Samasource's training improved the confidence of young women and resulted in more open and forthcoming engagement.

"A lady I was speaking with two weeks ago started off as an agent on a Samasource project and when she started she could barely speak, maintain eye contact or hold a conversation for more than a minute without getting overwhelmed but as they progress and move onto the next level, they become so confident and they hold their heads up high. These guys are amazing and have so much room for learning."

Delivery Center Staff Member, Kenya

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

8,398
youth beneficiaries
trained

In 2016, Samasource had a cumulative direct beneficiary count of 8,398 since starting operations in 2008. Additionally, through their M&E, Samasource identified that they directly impacted 25,950 income dependents and 34,348 cumulative individuals (beneficiaries and income dependents).

85% of beneficiaries continued to work or pursue their education after they left Samasource. Of those that continued working, 98% remained in the formal sector, in jobs created by existing firms, with 51% of them working in the ICT sector.

USD 240 average monthly income (during program)	USD 1,714 average monthly income (after program)
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Beneficiaries' income increased from below USD 2.00 per day to earning a living wage of USD 8.00 a day. As a result, they were able to increase their spending on safer housing, nutritious food, education and healthcare. During their tenure at Samasource, beneficiaries' benefits also included healthcare, catered meals, financial literacy training and health and safety workshops.

A mid-term evaluation commissioned by Samasource found that not all beneficiaries were paid the same. While USD 8.00 per day was the minimum wage, it was found that beneficiaries received varying salaries. To ensure equality in labor practices, Samasource indicated plans to review survey feedback from employees and to pay all agents the same living wage.

The evaluation also found that one year after leaving Samasource for full-time employment, beneficiaries' average monthly wage was USD 1,714. Up to four years later, beneficiaries' earning power was found to have increased up to 3.5 times.⁹

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Low levels of education, lack of financial support, and a lack of skills and experience are challenges faced by the youth in accessing newly created or newly improved digital jobs.** Exacerbating this is the lack of appropriate training and employment schemes available to youth. The Samasource program provided access to appropriate, targeted, market-related training; thus, assisting in overcoming beneficiaries' lack of skills.
- 2. Following the completion of the program, beneficiaries reported that the time they spent in searching for jobs was much shorter than that reported by other youth in Nairobi with similar backgrounds.** Beneficiaries also reported being able to secure employment at other companies that follow traditional hiring practices as well as other impact sourcing organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Ongoing engagement and close partnerships with employers is necessary to ensure that training remains relevant to employers' needs.** This engagement also increases the likelihood of young person finding a digital job.
- 2. Advanced training programs must ensure that the initial screening of participants efficiently identifies young people with basic digital literacy skills in place.** This ensures that beneficiaries have the capacity to sufficiently absorb and the content of the training without having to focus on instilling basic digital literacy skills.
- 3. Programs should include training on soft skills.** Programs must ensure that young people engaged in online work have the soft skills that will help them secure contracts. Digital job programs should therefore incorporate not only the technical components of digital work, but also soft skills components such as client engagement, conflict resolution and general negotiation skills.
- 4. Digital jobs programs need to be mindful of the confidence differences between male and female beneficiaries during program implementation.** In cases when female beneficiaries do not openly engage with the content in discussions, programs should alter their delivery methods to

⁹ **Assumptions:** Samasource calculates total attributable incremental income for the average Samasource worker. Total refers to the fact that this represents cumulative earnings for their period at Samasource plus three years after that. Attributable means they are tying all these quantified earnings to their experience at Samasource because they are only looking at incremental income.

Data Source(s): The primary data sources for this calculation are derived from baseline and follow-up surveys, administered online to every Samasource worker. The baseline survey is completed within two weeks of starting employment. The follow-up survey is completed within two weeks of the three-month tenure mark. The post-Samasource survey is conducted one to three years after a worker has left. The survey samples a randomized subset of former workers that have a minimum tenure of three months.

ensure female beneficiaries are not excluded from receiving the benefits of the training. Such strategies could include delivering content to men and women separately.

5. **Samasource experienced high retention rates over the training period.** This resulted in the program being fuller than originally expected and not being able to present the training opportunity to as broad array of people as originally expected, as higher levels of turnover were anticipated. As a result, **there is a need for digital jobs programs to balance reach with retention.** This can be done by increasing focus on the job search and job placement components of the program
6. **Digital jobs programs must manage beneficiaries' expectations.** Program staff should ensure clear communication and accurate information about the program duration, program content and outcomes before program launch.