

Youth and Virtual Gigs: A Case Study



Enabling Youth Access and Success in
Online Work for Long-Term Professional Goals



Acknowledgments

The author owes a debt of gratitude to our partners, KaziRemote and the Kenya Ministry of ICT, Innovation, and Youth Affairs, who supported this project with resources, networks, and technical expertise while training youth in Kenya for virtual gigs. Thank you to the youth who participated in the Skills for Virtual Gigs Initiative pilot, which afforded us the opportunity to strengthen their ability to obtain virtual gigs and learn from their experiences and feedback.

This effort was funded by IREX through its Center for Applied Learning and Impact. Many staff members provided invaluable knowledge, expertise, and insights that enabled this workbook to come to fruition. Jill Miller, Director of the Center for Applied Learning and Impact, provided strategic guidance and support. Tsega Belachew, Technical Advisor for Youth and Economic Opportunities, and Sarah Bever, Senior Technical Advisor for Education, provided technical support on youth development and training. Charles Guedenet, Technical Advisor for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning, provided evaluation and analysis expertise. Jennifer Cain, Program Officer, guided partnership development, and Althea Lloyd-White, Program Officer for Policy and Program Learning at the Center for International Private Enterprise, provided technical support on gender and social inclusion considerations.

About IREX

IREX is a global development and education organization. We focus on people, not on vaccines, roads, or wells. We work in more than 100 countries on issues such as education, leadership, information, and youth. Learn more: www.irex.org.

About IREX's Center for Applied Learning and Impact

IREX's Center for Applied Learning and Impact strengthens the assessment of IREX's impact, develops cutting-edge new approaches, creates a dedicated space for learning, and integrates technology and gender across the IREX portfolio.

Nina Oduro
Senior Advisor for Youth & Leadership
November 2021

IREX is committed to safeguarding all program participants from harm; IREX maintains zero tolerance for all forms of abuse, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.



IREX
1275 K Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005

Table of Contents

I Executive Summary	4
II The Challenge: Youth Unemployment and Virtual Gigs	4
III Initiative Approach	5
IV Results	7
Career Self-Efficacy	8
Skills Development	9
Gender and Skills	12
V Lessons Learned	13
VI Recommendations	14
VII Annex: Skill Definitions	16
VIII References	17

I Executive Summary

The Skills for Virtual Gigs Initiative sought to understand the needs of youth for entering and succeeding in virtual gigs and leveraging their learning and experience for their long-term professional goals. This effort responded to the challenge of unemployment and underemployment and the fast-changing labor market, as well as the opportunities presented by technological innovation that young people in Kenya and around the world encounter as they seek avenues to earn a living. Piloted with youth in Mombasa, Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual intervention provided 23 youth with soft skills and transcription skills so that they could obtain virtual gig work, deliver quality work to clients, and use their learning and experience to achieve their future career goals.

Over the course of the intervention, youth gained confidence and optimism for their careers despite the challenges around them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, 77% were very likely to apply for a virtual gig within three months after the initiative and 67.92% were confident in their ability to take what was relevant from virtual gigs and apply it to their future professional goals. Youth demonstrated the highest skill development gain in transcription among all the skills developed in the training. Several soft skills that youth were trained in saw high average gains, including entrepreneurial thinking and the skill of learning to learn, both of which are critical for virtual gigs and across labor markets as in-demand jobs consistently shift. Female participants, who made up half of the total participant group, demonstrated greater improvements than their male peers in key soft skills.

Along with the findings, there were also key lessons learned, including the need to engage employers to help youth obtain work and to shape the enabling environment for youth to access virtual gigs. Another key lesson was embracing the need to deliver the intervention virtually as a result of COVID-19 and making changes to support youth effectively, from timing of activities to using an interactive online platform and providing internet data. More support was needed for youth with disabilities and measuring the job acquisition of youth post intervention. Both should be addressed in future interventions.

As other organizations and researchers seek to further understand and support youth in virtual gigs and career development overall, they key recommendations from this initiative are:

- ▶ Use virtual gigs training to help youth learn about their pathway to long-term professional goals.
- ▶ Use soft skills development that fosters career self-efficacy among youth.
- ▶ Engage young women intentionally and support them to succeed.
- ▶ Leverage virtual learning so that youth can strengthen their digital literacy.
- ▶ Incorporate learning about mitigating risks factors in working online and enable access to digital tools for underserved youth.

II The Challenge: Youth Unemployment and Virtual Gigs

For many young people around the world, navigating the path to employment is challenging. This reality is enhanced by the changing nature of work as the rapid pace of technological innovation impacts how work is performed, the types of jobs available, and the skills required to succeed. With more than 64 million unemployed youth globally and 145 million young workers living in poverty (Ruiz, 2021), the need for youth to enter and thrive in the labor market is urgent.

The growth of the virtual gig¹ economy allows for new work opportunities, yet also makes apparent barriers in access and support for entry and success among youth. The industry is characterized by online platforms that connect workers and employers and relies on short-term, freelance, temporary, or project-based work performed remotely using digital devices (without a need for in-person or face-to-face interaction). The World Bank projected that in 2020, the virtual gig economy would generate gross services revenue (the total value of all transactions that pass through each virtual gig marketplace, which includes income generated by the firms and payments to

¹ Virtual gig refers to online outsourcing, microwork, or online freelancing and is characterized by employers hiring workers to supply services or perform tasks via Internet-based marketplaces or platforms.

workers) in the range of \$15 billion to \$25 billion (Kuek et al., 2015). To benefit from this growing industry, youth need the skills to navigate and obtain work and must be supported to succeed and leverage their experience for their long-term professional goals.

While virtual gigs present a path for youth employment, young people’s vulnerabilities can also be exploited in the industry. From income instability to lack of access to benefits such as healthcare insurance or paid time off, robust policies for online workers are necessary to protect youth from risks in the field. Additionally, some youth around the world are not able to participate in the industry at all due to lack of access to internet, digital devices, funds needed for internet data, or lack of digital literacy skills. Gender inequity further compounds these barriers to participation for young women. The need for an enabling environment within the virtual gig industry for all youth to fully benefit from the opportunities it provides is critical and requires policy makers and virtual gig employers to invest in solutions. While efforts aimed at addressing the challenges are underway, support for youth to navigate the fast-paced industry safely to earn a living and succeed in achieving their long-term professional aspirations is crucial.

Initiative Approach

In addressing the need for support for youth to navigate the virtual gig economy, IREX collaborated with KaziRemote and the Kenya Ministry of ICT, Youth, and Innovation on the [Skills for Virtual Gigs Initiative](#). The pilot aimed to equip youth in Mombasa, Kenya with key technical and soft skills necessary for securing virtual gigs and leveraging their learning and experience for their long-term professional goals.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative trained and supported 23 youth between the ages of 18 and 29 with key skills by leveraging IREX’s [Youth Essential Skills Curriculum](#) and transcription – a micro-work² skill taught by [KaziRemote](#). Through an open call for participation, a diverse group of youth were selected, including gender diversity and youth with disabilities. The profile of the youth was as follows:



Youth with experience: Some experience doing virtual gigs while living in Mombasa County within the past 12 months.



Youth with interest: Interest in obtaining virtual gigs (doing online work) but have no previous experience.

The initiative took place from August through September 2020, with a seven-day online skills development training followed by a virtual gigs project and support to obtain virtual gig work.

Table 1: Initiative Overview

Phase	Activity	Duration	Description	Peer Learning and Support
Training	Skills Development	1 week (7 days)	Virtual Training on finding, securing, working, completing, and leveraging virtual gigs for future professional goals.	WhatsApp group for participants and facilitators (during and after intervention)
Post-Training	Virtual Gig Project	1.5 months	Assigned transcription gig for participants to complete independently and submit for feedback.	
	Gig Search Support		Participants supported while searching for gigs through check-in calls on challenges, successes, and overall progress.	Grouping of participants into peer groups with at least one person with previous virtual gig experience in each group

² Microwork requires basic numeracy and literacy skills. Transcription was chosen due to the ability for youth to start with basic literacy and digital skills and strengthen their skill overtime.

In order to succeed in the virtual gig industry, both soft skills³ and technical skills⁴ are necessary. For this initiative, we reviewed the Kenya Ministry of ICT, Youth, and Innovation’s Ajira Digital curriculum and the experiences of both virtual gig workers and inexperienced yet interested virtual giggers to determine the journey of a virtual gig worker from finding work to completing it and seeking new opportunities. Then, we determined the key soft skills that are necessary at each step in the journey (See Table 2). These soft skills – positive self-concept, entrepreneurial thinking, communication, resilience, time management, interdisciplinarity, and adaptability – were aligned with the technical skill of transcription (see Annex for skill definitions). While soft skills may overlap in each step, we emphasized the key soft skills that youth must have and identify in their own growth and pursuit of virtual gig work and beyond.

Table 2: Skills Development Framework		
Virtual Gig Journey	Soft-Skills	Technical Skills
Step 1: Get Gigs	Positive Self-Concept Entrepreneurial Thinking Communication Learning to Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Transcription ▶ Technology and platforms ▶ Popular phrases ▶ Styles ▶ Punctuation ▶ Writing ▶ Payments
Step 2: Do the Work	Communication Resilience Learning to Learn Time Management	
Step 3: Wrap it Up	Communication Positive Self-Concept Learning to Learn	
Step 4: Chart Your Future	Interdisciplinarity Adaptability Learning to Learn	

Transcription was selected because it is among the in-demand online occupations (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018) in Kenya and can be accessible to youth if trained. We do note, however, that youth without moderate digital literacy skills or access to digital devices with online connectivity face barriers obtaining all virtual gigs, including transcription.

³ Personal attributes, social skills, and communication abilities that support interpersonal relationships and interactions with others (Armstrong et al., 2018, p.16).

⁴ Knowledge and capabilities to perform specialized tasks (Armstrong et al., 2018, p.16).

IV Results

The evaluation of the Skills for Virtual Gig Initiative used two methods, (1) a retrospective pre-post survey on skills development and career self-efficacy⁵ and (2) a baseline and end line test on transcription skills. The results summarize the key learnings from the initiative based on 20 responses.

At the beginning of the initiative, 25 youth were selected to participate from Mombasa, Kenya. Due to personal challenges, 23 participants were able to complete the initiative. Survey responses were completed by twenty 20 youth. The results and insights are generated from these respondents.

Table 3: Demographic and Background Snapshot: Youth Trainees

Number of Respondents	20		
Age	Average 24-25 years old and range from 21 to 29.		
Gender	50% Male		50% Female
Education	65% Completed university education	30% Some university level education	5% Some vocational or technical school education
Virtual Gig Experience	15 respondents had no experience in virtual gigs before the training, compared to five who reported having some experience (doing at least 1 job in the last 12 months).		
	Majority (13) had not participated in any virtual gig training before. Minority (7) reported having participated in at least one.		

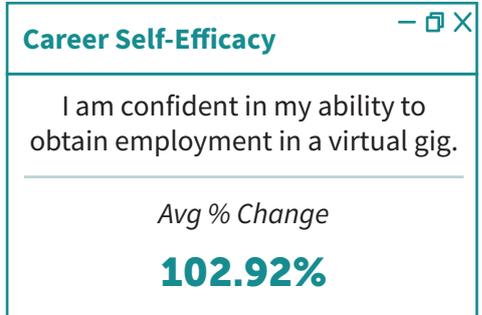
⁵ Label encompassing judgments of personal efficacy in relation to the wide range of behavior involved in career choice and adjustment (Lent & Hackett, 1987, p.349).

A Career Self-Efficacy

Career self-efficacy is “an individual’s belief that he or she has the ability to complete successfully the tasks related to decision making in relation to his or her career” (Reddan, 2015, p.291) This includes their aptitude, ability, needs, personality, and values that affect their career decision-making process. By evaluating the career self-efficacy of youth through assessing their confidence in transcription and obtaining virtual gigs, there were significant gains in youth optimism for obtaining future employment after the intervention.

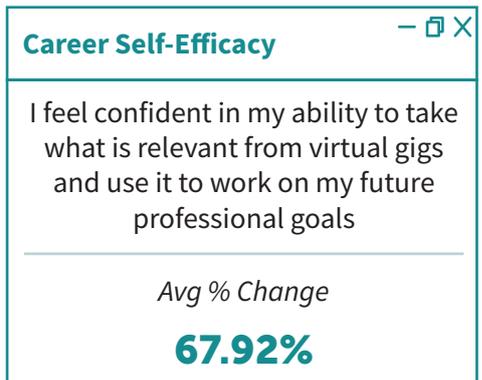
Youth participant confidence in career decision making by the end of the intervention increased by 102.92%.

In addition, youth with no experience in virtual gigs reported more change in career self-efficacy than those with little or no experience (91% difference). Participants with some virtual gig experience also reported on average much greater improvement in the skills area of “Transcription” (85%). This indicates that while participants with little or no experience in virtual gigs have on average greater confidence in their ability to obtain gigs after the intervention, they also on average report less gain in transcription skills than those with some experience. While confidence may be high for potential entry into virtual gig opportunities for youth with no experience, their transcription skills are also critical for obtaining work and must be strengthened to succeed long term.



Youth also demonstrated confidence in their commitment to taking action on their career decisions with 77% saying they were very likely to apply for a virtual gig in the next three months.

While 32% of youth said they were very likely to apply for a virtual gig in another field or industry other than transcription in the next three months, 67.92% felt confident in their ability to take what was relevant from virtual gigs and apply it to their future professional goals. This signifies that youth generally believed that their abilities could be applied to opportunities outside the scope of virtual transcription, potentially for their careers outside of the virtual gig industry. Self-belief and optimism toward their future careers are critical for youth, particularly in Kenya, where youth unemployment and underemployment are high. The career self-efficacy demonstrated by youth may also be informed by the disruption of COVID-19 in youth access to work opportunities and overall constraints to physical movement and activities, as youth may have found hope in learning how to navigate virtual gigs during an uncertain time and using it to consider their path to achieving their professional goals.



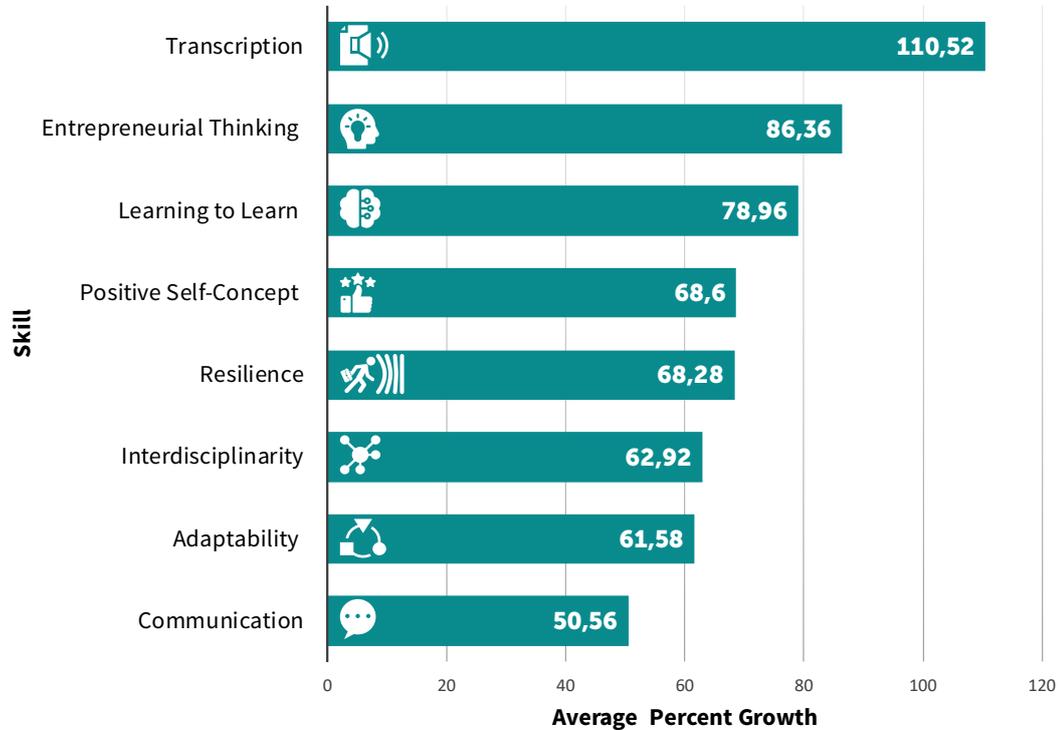
After being introduced to the expert virtual giggers ...[I] realize that having built this skill during this training period, it will be applicable in pursuing my career dream as well as a transcriber.

– Youth Trainee

B Skills Development

There were significant gains in youth skills acquisition. **All youth respondents reported gains in soft skills of 50% or greater**, particularly in positive self-concept, learning to learn, entrepreneurial thinking, communication, resilience, interdisciplinarity, and adaptability, and the technical skill of transcription.

Figure 1: Average Skills Acquisition



- ▶ **Transcription** had the highest average growth (110.52%) in skills for participants because the majority of trainees had no virtual gig experience before the intervention based on survey questions. The high gains in this skill potentially signify the motivation of the trainees to acquire high competency, as transcription was not only new to the majority of them, but a non-negotiable technical skill that is essential to succeed as an online transcriber. In addition, the skill is a core requirement for one's ability to obtain and succeed at jobs focused on transcription and furthermore, grow as a virtual gigger.

In addition to survey questions on transcription, youth were also tested on their transcription skills before and after the training by transcribing an audio recording. They were given different recordings at the beginning and end with the same level of difficulty. Youth showed an average of 40% improvement in their tests after the training as compared to before the training.

- ▶ **Entrepreneurial Thinking** showed the highest gain among soft skills (86.36%). This skill encompassed the ability to find virtual gigs on platforms as well as understand the needs of clients and pitching one's abilities for opportunities. Although some trainees had previous experience seeking virtual gigs, the high gains in this skill demonstrate the critical value of identifying and navigating online work platforms and learning how to match those opportunities with one's abilities. This skill also enables virtual giggers to leverage their abilities for other career opportunities, within and outside of the virtual gigging industry. For instance, through the training, youth created a five-year professional plan for their career paths – from freelancing and entrepreneurship to full-time employment.
- ▶ **Learning to Learn** is a priority skill for online work, especially because virtual giggers need to be consistently up-skilling or re-skilling to keep up with the most current in-demand needs of clients. By mastering this skill, these youth are able to guide their own learning processes by understanding a skill, using it, breaking it down into small steps, and considering how the skill can be used to achieve more or different things in the future (Power Learning Tool, n.d.).

Figure 2 - Learning to Learn Skill Components

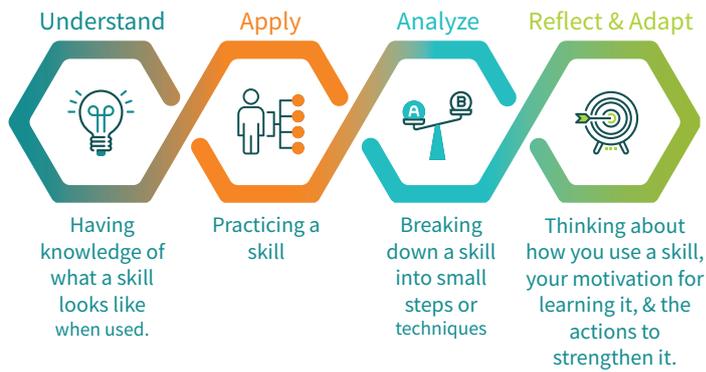


Table 4 - Learning to Learn

Skill Component	Average Percent Change
Understand	99.38%
Apply	66.04%
Analyze	78.96%
Reflect and adapt	62.22%

The data for the learning to learn skill is based solely on measurement of communication skills. Trainees were asked questions about learning to learn the skill of communication, which entailed four key components of the learning to learn process - (1) understand; (2) apply; (3) analyze; and (4) reflect and adapt. **Overall, trainees saw a gain of 78.96% for learning to learn.** More impressively, the component of “understand” for communication was 99.38%, signifying that trainees gained value from learning the meaning of the skill and its relevance to virtual gigs. Components of learning to learn like apply (66.04%) and analyze (78.96%), as well as reflect and adapt (62.22%) trailed in comparison, which signifies that more time may be required for skills development training to fully master learning to learn beyond the understand component. While trainees were largely familiar with the skill of communication, the contextualization of the skill for virtual gigs introduced a new element that may require additional support to be able to have more gain in the apply, analyze, and reflect and adapt components of learning to learn.



I never used to break down communication into smaller parts so that I can understand the client better but now, I know the importance of doing so. It will help me deliver an [transcription] accuracy of 99%- 100%

– Youth Trainee ✓

► **Positive Self-Concept** saw 68.8% growth among participants, yet when broken down into core sub-skills, it is evident that participants had the most increase in self-confidence (Table 5: no.1-3). The confidence in identifying what they were good at, what they could offer clients, and their knowledge and skills for virtual gigs signifies that their perceptions of their potential to contribute their assets to the industry increased, which is critical for entry into the workforce. Yet, the participants’ gains were lower for self-awareness (Table 5: no. 4) about thinking about their strengths for client needs (43.17%). This indicates that while participants felt good about their gains for virtual gigs work broadly, they may have had more difficulty reflecting on their specific attributes that connect to that feeling.

Table 5: Participant Growth by Sub-Skills of Positive-Self-Concept

1.	I can identify what I am good at for virtual gig jobs.	82.50%
2.	I feel confident in what I can offer to potential clients.	77.08%
3.	I feel good about my knowledge and skills for virtual gigs	71.67%
4.	I think about my strengths when considering what clients need.	43.17%



Before the training I did not know my strengths and weaknesses but after being trained on how to identify my strengths, I was able to analyze myself well and come up with strategies to improve on my weaknesses

– Youth Trainee ✓

► **Communication** was developed throughout the trainings, as it is required in the majority of the virtual gigs journey. Yet, **this skill had the least overall gains by participants (50.6%)** as compared to the other skills developed. Communication is not only a skill that is necessary for connecting with virtual gig clients, but also critical in transcription. As transcribers, participants learned the aspects of communication they needed for engaging with clients as well as performing the task, which entails active listening. Participants had more positive perceptions of their ability to communicate with clients (Table 6: no. 1-3) over their active listening abilities for transcription virtual gigs ((Table 6: no. 4-5). The element of communication that saw the least gains was thinking about the purpose of one’s correspondence for communication with clients (32.92%).

Rank	Statement	Percentage
1	I understand how to communicate with clients.	65.00%
2	I consider the personality and attitudes of clients in order to communicate professionally and connect with them.	60.83%
3	I take time to think about the best way (i.e., language, word choice, and grammar) to correspond with a client.	52.08%
4	I am able to concentrate when listening to a speaker even when there are distractions.	50.83%
5	I am attentive and focused when listening to an audio recording or video.	41.67%
6	I think about the purpose of my correspondence before communicating with a client.	32.92%



I realized I had to improve on my listening skills so that I may be better. I also realized I had to improve on my turn taking. With this at hand, I decided to practice on my areas of weakness so that I may be great at them in order to understand my audience/clients in a professional way...

– Youth Trainee ✓

► **Resilience**, which is key for virtual giggers, saw an increase of 68.28% in the skill overall. When broken down into sub-skills, participants expressed the most improvement in planning, particularly outlining the sequence of smaller tasks required to achieve a goal (91.67%). Another aspect of resilience that saw significant gains was time management, as participants saw an average gain of 73.75%. There were more modest gains in proactivity (57%), which is the aspect of resilience that support individuals with identifying obstacles and needs in their future and preparing for them. The overall gains in this skill signify the need for more experiences for participants to draw on to assess their growth in resilience, particularly as they navigate virtual gigs.

► **Adaptability** and **Interdisciplinarity** are connected to one another and saw gains of 60.25% and 62.92% respectively. While there were positive overall gains for these skills, participants may have benefited from having multiple experiences to reflect on their adaptability and interdisciplinarity over a longer period of time in order to see more significant gains. It may be possible to strengthen these skills after the intervention as participants use the skills to access multiple virtual gigs and leverage their learning and experiences for other professional goals.

C **Gender and Skills** ▼

While there was a gender balance among youth participants in the intervention, there were some differences in the skill gains across gender. For instance, women on average demonstrated more improvement across all soft skills, including learning to learn components (Understand, Analyze, Apply, and Reflect and Adapt) and employment skills. The largest differences, however, are in the soft skills of entrepreneurial thinking (48%) and interdisciplinarity (50%) and in the learning to learn components of “Understand” (85%) and “Analyze” (57%). This is significant, as women in Kenya face barriers to accessing online work, including the lack of access to information and resources, as well as cultural norms about gender roles (Skills for Virtual Gigs, n.d., p.9-10). Yet, these results demonstrate that despite the challenges that women face with entry into virtual gigs, they do not have a lack of ability in knowledge and skill acquisition for accessing and performing virtual gigs.

Table 7: Gender Difference in Skill Acquisition	
Skill	% Difference - Gender (female - male)
Career Self-Efficacy	42.5%
Transcription	12.7%
Learning to Learn: Understand	84.6%
Learning to Learn: Apply	26.3%
Learning to Learn: Analyze	57.1%
Learning to Learn: Reflect and Adapt	37.2%
Communication	19.5%
Positive self-concept	28.2%
Interdisciplinarity	50.0%
Resilience	37.0%
Entrepreneurial Thinking	48.4%

V Lessons Learned

There were lessons learned during the Skills for Virtual Gigs Initiative as a result of the challenges that both trainers and participants faced, from the lack of engagement of multiple stakeholders in the virtual gigs industry to implementing the training during the COVID-19 pandemic. They include the following:

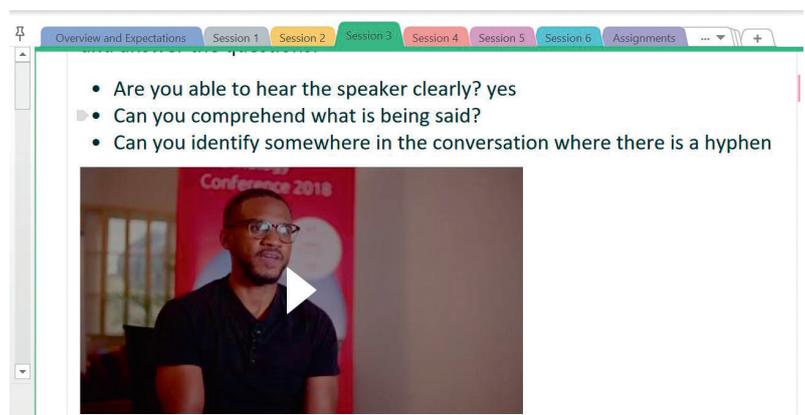
Employer engagement: While this initiative engaged both the Government of Kenya and the transcription company KaziRemote to support the skills development of youth, it did not engage virtual gig employers. Addressing this limitation would have been beneficial for creating an enabling environment for more Kenyan companies to connect with youth virtual giggers and enable them to recognize the value of hiring online workers and trusting youth workers to work virtually. In addition, employers outside of Kenya would also benefit from the same experience, thus providing Kenyan virtual giggers with international networks to obtain work in the future.

Engaging employers would have allowed youth to not only learn from virtual giggers, but also enabled employers to assess youth with skills and abilities that they could potentially hire. While youth worked on a sample gig as part of the intervention, it would have been beneficial for them to work on a project from a potential employer, like an apprenticeship. Furthermore, employers need to actively participate in skills building interventions with youth so that the linkages to employers are developed and potentially translated into virtual work opportunities.

Virtual Learning: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the intervention, which initially included an in-person training, was adapted for virtual delivery. The adaptation enabled some key learnings as described below:

▶ **Timing of Activities:** Going virtual meant that training time had to be shortened to maximize learning yet protect participants from “Zoom fatigue.” As a result, full-day trainings were shortened to three-hour trainings. Additionally, the in-person practice-based components had to be re-imagined in the virtual space. Learn more about the activities in the Skills for Virtual Gigs Workbook.

▶ **Accessible and Interactive Virtual Platform:** To mitigate the fact that the trainings were no longer possible in-person, Microsoft OneNote (www.onenote.com) was used because it was free, easy to access, enabled all participants to both collaborate and work independently, allowed diverse types of content (i.e. pictures, videos, etc.), and enabled trainers to review participant work. It enabled youth to access a virtual notebook at any time to complete assignments that could



easily be reviewed by trainers. Overall, it is important to use tools that can be accessed easily by trainees and allow interaction, as well as tracking of work and assignments by trainers.

▶ **Internet Data Stipends:** With trainings being virtual in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which job loss was high and there was much uncertainty about youth well-being, it was critical to consider how to support youth. In addition to check-in calls that were a part of the intervention, providing youth with data stipends to cover their training hours was also necessary. This helped to offset the cost of seeking virtual gigs after the training and provided them with an opportunity to learn and network that could enhance their ability work get work.

Support for Youth with Disabilities: During the training, two participants self-reported as having an emotional or mental disability and therefore were provided more support through check-ins and lengthened assignment times to ensure that any additional needs were met. Despite this, the participants struggled to complete the training. This indicates that additional support would have been beneficial and perhaps enabled the participants to complete the training.

Job Acquisition Measurement: While measuring career self-efficacy, it is important to assess the effectiveness of the intervention for helping youth achieve future career goals; measurement of job acquisition is also important to assess the ability of youth to obtain work. While this intervention does not yet provide this information, IREX intends to evaluate participants after one-year to assess their success in leveraging the experience to obtain work. So far, there is anecdotal evidence from check-ins with youth that some have obtained employment within and outside of virtual gigs after the intervention.

VI Recommendations

The Skills for Virtual Gigs Initiative enabled deeper understanding of the skills and support youth need to enter and succeed in virtual gigs. The pilot provided learning for youth that they can use to achieve their long-term professional goals as online freelancers or in other professions.

Use Virtual Gigs Training as Pathway to Long-Term Careers

A key learning from this intervention was the opportunity for youth to learn about how to access and navigate online work and translate that learning to achieve their professional goals in diverse industries. The soft skills that youth built are desired by employers online and offline, and mastering them will help youth advance their careers. With online work expanding, especially after COVID-19 (UN News, 2020), youth must have opportunities to learn about what online work entails and how they can leverage it for their own long-term goals. For youth to be able to navigate the workforce now and in the future, virtual gigs should be a part of their learning as they explore the career path best suited for them to earn and grow. Interventions focused on learning and earning should incorporate virtual gigs as a potential option for youth, also educating them on the risks involved in the field.

Develop Career Self-Efficacy with Soft Skills Training

The self-belief needed to succeed in virtual gigs and translate the experience for professional growth is immense. This work entails various abilities, from self-learning to networking, as well as overcoming challenges, including rejection from employers. It is a journey that requires career self-efficacy that can be developed through the set of soft skills included in this intervention. From entrepreneurial thinking to learning to learn and positive self-concept, youth were able to learn and practice the skills that enable the career-self efficacy that they demonstrated by the end of the intervention. It is important to enable career self-efficacy among youth in future interventions, because it is not only necessary for virtual gigs, but also can be used to achieve other career goals and potentially help youth find work that is low risk long term.

Engage Young Women in All Interventions

The gains in skills demonstrated by young women during this intervention is indicative of their capabilities if supported and provided with the opportunities they need to learn and thrive. With research showing that young women face more challenges entering into virtual gigs (Skills for Virtual Gigs Summary, n.d.), initiatives should emphasize the participation of young women. This may include targeted outreach within communities for young women or focusing on all-female training groups to help bridge the gap that exists for them to access virtual work as compared to their male peers.

Leverage Virtual Learning for Virtual Gig Skills Development

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst for providing the virtual gig training online, it was an effective method that should be used to train youth on virtual gig work moving forward. Moreover, the results from this intervention suggest that the potential for these trainings to be conducted for larger groups of youth online than can be achieved through in-person trainings. Using the medium that youth would be expected to use for obtaining online work helped develop the digital literacy that they would need to rely on to obtain work. Youth who do not have digital devices should not be excluded from the training but supported to access devices so that they can participate. This support may entail helping youth find community centers with computers, allowing youth to use phones, and/or providing digital devices whenever possible.

Mitigate Risks of Online Work for Youth

The world of online work has various risks, from online safety issues to lack of benefits for workers. These challenges are not easily eliminated without systemic change efforts that catalyze the industry to invest more in supporting workers. While this intervention developed a local government partnership and provided avenues for youth to learn about risk factors during the training, future initiatives must take this further in order to create an enabling environment for youth, which may include diverse stakeholder engagement and advocacy activities such as a working group of government, virtual gig employers, youth, and online work platforms to develop solutions that eliminate risks for youth and other marginalized populations in virtual gigs.

VII Annex: Skill Definitions

Skill	Definition
 Adaptability	The ability to recognize, understand, learn from, and adjust to changes in people, places, and circumstances. It includes the ability to embrace and make the best of the unknown.
 Communication	The ability to effectively express oneself. It includes active listening, knowing how to reach your audience, storytelling, making a case, and professional communication with others.
 Collaboration	The ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse individuals. It includes coordination, collaborative decision making, conflict resolution, negotiation, and communication within teams.
 Empathy	The ability to feel and understand what someone else is feeling. It involves putting yourself in another person's shoes and seeing what it looks like from there. It includes naming emotions and understanding a person's environment.
 Entrepreneurial Thinking	The ability to see and experience problems as opportunities to create value for oneself and others. It includes understanding the needs and interests of people who are affected by a problem or an opportunity. It requires obtaining available resources, thinking creatively about solutions to a problem, and embracing risk and things that are unknown.
 Higher Order Thinking	The ability to see an issue, take in information about it, consider the options available, and organize those options by order of priority to reach a reasonable conclusion. It includes problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning.
 Inclusiveness	The ability to consider or involve diverse people and treat them fair and equal. It includes considering who is present, who is missing, and who something is intended for.
 Interdisciplinarity	The ability to draw connections between different types of experiences and information. It includes applying knowledge from one area of life to another, such as sports and health or home life and school life.
 Positive Self-concept	The ability to for a person to demonstrate an understanding of their own strengths and potential. It includes self-awareness, self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-worth, and sense of well-being and being valued.
 Resilience	The ability to continue working towards goals and tasks despite difficulties. It includes developing connections with others, seeking support when dealing with challenges, and asking for help.
 Learning to Learn	The practice of learning how to learn on your own by using a curious, humble and growth-focused mindset. The habit of using an ongoing reflective practice process. This requires self-motivation, embracing discomfort, struggle, risk, and failure. It includes setting and tracking goals, finding support, and using feedback.
 Transcription	Converting audio to text

VIII References

- ▶ Armstrong, K., Parmelee, M., Santifort, S. S., Burley, J. B., Fleet, J., Koziol, M., Greenberg, R., Schwartz, J., Greenberg, R., Schwartz, J., & Tetrick, R. (2018). Preparing tomorrow's workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution For business: A framework for action. In Deloitte (p. 16). Deloitte. https://gbc-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Deloitte_Preparing-tomorrows-workforce-for-4IR-revised-08.11.pdf
- ▶ Kuek, S., Paradi-Guilford, C., Fayomi, T., Imaizumi, S., & Ipeirotis, P. (2015). The Global Opportunity in Online Sourcing. In The World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22284/The0global0opp0n0online0outsourcing.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- ▶ Lent, Robert & Hackett, Gail. (1987). Career self-efficacy: Empirical status and future directions. Journal of Vocational Behavior. 30. (p.349) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223678204_Career_self-efficacy_Empirical_status_and_future_directions.
- ▶ Power Learning Tool: Employee Essential Skills Suite. (n.d.). In IREX (pp. 9–10). Retrieved 2021, from <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/node/resource/power-learning-tool-employee-essential-skills.pdf>
- ▶ Reddan, G. (2015). Enhancing students' self-efficacy in making positive career decisions (p. 291). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1113595.pdf>
- ▶ Ruiz, M. (2021). Is the future ready for youth? Youth employment policies for evolving labour markets. 14–37. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_776024.pdf
- ▶ Skills for Virtual Gigs Summary. (n.d.). In IREX. Retrieved 2021, from <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/skills-for-virtual-gigs-research-summary.pdf>
- ▶ UN News. (2020, May 27). “Business as unusual”: How COVID-19 could change the future of work. UN News; United Nations. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064802>

