



# Echoes From Ajegunle

CHAPTER I:

## Stories of transformed lives



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# About Ajegunle.org

Ajegunle.org seeks to create better livelihoods – through ICT opportunities, entrepreneurship training, short-term internships, *Graduate Loan Scheme* – for young people in Nigeria's underserved areas. We invite you to view the project video at [www.ireport.com/docs/DOC-14359](http://www.ireport.com/docs/DOC-14359). Ego, like many other young people in Nigeria's most popular slum, was not sure of what tomorrow held for her. Now, she works at the Visa Section of the British Deputy High Commission in Lagos, thanks to her participation in the Ajegunle.org project. Funke, another project participant, grew her business of ₦2,000 by about 2,800% after the training. We are working towards the replication of the idea beyond Ajegunle, and are also keen on establishing the first *Innovation Centre*.

The *Innovation Centre* will serve as a knowledge hub where more youth from the community can be empowered for the world of work. It will serve the purposes of *training* (providing a space for the Ajegunle.org training program and a centre for the advancement of workplace preparedness for Ajegunle's youth), *incubation* (providing workspaces for the entrepreneurs that we train so that they can overcome the infrastructure barrier and have a place where they can walk into and work to provide their services towards income generation and wealth creation) and *service provision* (providing a place where community members can get relevant ICT-based services, as provided by our graduates who will benefit from immediate employment opportunities while they in turn provide the centre with low-cost manpower).

Ajegunle.org is an initiative of **Paradigm Initiative Nigeria**, a social enterprise that connects young people with ICT-enabled opportunities. This eBook tells the first set of stories of Ajegunle.org graduates – the people who prove that what we do is worth every investment made. Thank you!



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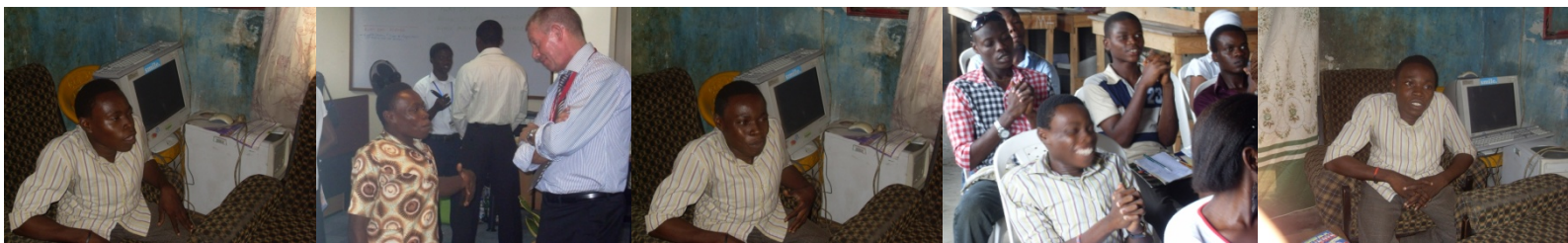
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**Concept Credit:** Ashoka's *Stories of Change*



# Emmanuel Maduforo

Emmanuel heard about Ajegunle.org through his Local Government officials and a friend. He is glad he joined the program because it afforded him the opportunity to pick up computing skills and to also learn more about converting his business interests into reality. "It was a great and wonderful experience and my key take-away from the program was new knowledge about entrepreneurship", Emmanuel says of the training program. After completing his training, he benefited from the internship scheme and was also able to train other young people in his community. He added, "...my parents are very happy that Ajegunle.org has increased my skills in all areas of life, and it's also a stepping stone for my career."





# Esther Olatunde

Esther joined the program in March 2008, after completing secondary school education in July 2007. The rather shy young woman had no knowledge about computers before that time but she has now become extremely comfortable – and productive – with computers, based on the lessons she picked up during the Ajegunle.org training. After her own training, Esther extended the knowledge she acquired to 6 other people – two of whom were her siblings – as part of the *relay training* scheme of the program. She completed 4 months of internship with UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) at the UK Deputy High Commission, Lagos, before clinching a full-time job at the privately-run Terminal 2 of the *Murtala Mohammed Airport* in Lagos. Hers is another example of the huge impact that the program has had on participants, most of whom are now a pride to their family and community. Esther's next plan is to study for a bachelor's degree in Computer Science – a dream she says was helped along by her experience during the Ajegunle.org training exercise.





# Famous Onokurefe

Famous joined the training program in 2007, just after graduating from secondary school, and his desire to undergo formal training in computing was met when he was selected for the Ajegunle.org program. His parents were initially skeptical of the training because of the involvement of foreign volunteer trainers (*Korean Internet Volunteers*), but Famous was quick to find the exposure to a different culture quite revealing. Upon graduation, he was very comfortable with computers and also learnt a lot during the sessions on entrepreneurship – especially discussions on networking and marketing plans which he says will richly help him in his future pursuits. He trained 5 other young people in Ajegunle, including his younger brother and another young person who is a graduate of Chemical Engineering. After his training, Famous joined UKTI at the UK Deputy High Commission, Lagos, for a brief internship stint. While at UKTI, he applied for a full-time opening at the UK High Commission in Abuja, and according to him, “I had my first experience of air transportation when I was invited for the interview in Abuja, and I must say that being employed at such an international institution changed my life!” After 4 months of paid employment at the High Commission, Famous chose to pursue a bachelor’s degree in *Medical Biochemistry* at Delta State University. He spent about a month, during the period when Nigerian university teachers embarked on a nationwide strike, to add value and earn more money at UKTI – where he initially started out as an intern.





# Funke Alao

Funke completed her secondary school education in 2005 and worked as a distributor for a consumer goods company for a while. While seeking an opportunity to improve her livelihood, she learnt about Ajegunle.org and joined the first set of students in 2007. She picked up computing skills, found the cultural exchange program with the *Korean Internet Volunteers* extremely exciting and went on to train 4 fellow residents in Ajegunle as a way of giving back to her community. Even though she delayed telling her parents about the training until PIN hosted the first *Town Hall Meeting*, her mum was visibly impressed with the impact that the program had on her – and she excitedly told her daughter's story of change in front of an audience that had PIN's partners and the *Local Government* representatives. For Funke, the sessions on entrepreneurship were extremely useful and phrases such as "ideas rule the world" and "you don't need huge funds to start your business" encouraged her to take a ₦2,000 (\$14) loan from a colleague, to start her small shared public mobile phone (telecentre) business soon after the Ajegunle.org program. She succeeded in paying up her loan after one month and soon grew the business to an asset base in excess of ₦58,000 (\$387) – recording a huge growth of 2,800% within 12 months. Funke wants to become a Chartered Accountant in the next few years.







# James Onyebuchi Raphael

James joined the Ajegunle.org project in January 2009. Prior to the training, he had never used a computer and his parents were very excited about the opportunity since they did not have to cough up a huge sum for him to be able to pick up skills that will improve his livelihood opportunities. Even though James was a cobbler at the time he joined the program, he made time to join classes each day throughout the duration of the training. According to him, "the program opened my eyes to opportunities and how to take advantage of them." He is now very comfortable with computers and he found the entrepreneurship modules of the training most interesting. "Prior to the training, I never kept my books for the business and was therefore unable to make progress," said James, who now keeps his books and sets aside capital for re-investment in his business. He has been able to provide employment opportunities for young people around him through a business that now grosses an average turnover of ₦50,000 (\$338) every month. "I wish that the Ajegunle.org program would be extended to as many people as possible," he is always quick to say.





# Linda Orajekwe

Once she heard about the training program through her youth group, *Uncommon Man Network*, Linda knew she had to benefit from the *Ajgunle.org* experience. She said of her computing knowledge before the training: "I knew computers had monitors and keyboards but that was all I knew." Now, she is comfortable with sending monthly reports of her pastry business which has earned her the nickname, *Chin-chin Lady*. Beyond picking up computing skills and learning about how to start and grow her small business, Linda believes her communication skills have significantly improved and that she also learnt a lot about life while on the program. "I learnt that there is no excuse in life, and that I must always reach out for more." Of her internship experience, she says, "...it is an experience I wouldn't have missed for anything, though it was quite stressful for me at the beginning because I had never worked in a corporate environment before. I was able to adapt and, on a lighter note, there was a time I thought the air conditioning unit in my office was going to make me freeze to death." Linda, whose dad couldn't hide his appreciation for the change in his daughter's life as we interviewed her, added that "*Ajgunle.org* gave me something I couldn't get from my primary and secondary school, so I will never forget this experience that has changed my life. I am glad that I was able to train friends and my elder sister after the program, and I now work as a secretary at *OkayHouse Nigeria*."





# Nwanyiego Ijeh

Ego, as she is known to friends, learnt about the Ajegunle.org program through a youth group she belongs to - an organization that has been a partner on the project since inception - the *Uncommon Man Network*. She was one of the first set of students who benefited from the project and even though she only had theoretical knowledge of computing at the beginning, she is quick to describe the practical skills she picked up during the training. Those skills are now responsible for her position as an employee of the Visa Section of the UK Deputy High Commission in Lagos. Ego also found the entrepreneurial component of the training useful, along with the networking (and cultural exchange) opportunities that her set of trainees had with Korean Internet Volunteers – a group of 4 young Koreans who spent time training and networking with Ajegunle.org participants. She started her career with a four-month stint at UK Trade & Investment at the UK Deputy High Commission and the Commercial Section of the privately-run Terminal 2 of *Murtala Mohammed Airport*. Ego, who teamed up with a fellow Ajegunle.org participant to train five of her peers after she completed her own training, is also now a part-time student at the University of Lagos. She says with a smile, “my parents encouraged my participation in the Ajegunle.org program, and they have remained supportive to date.”





# Taiwo Olayinka

Before his selection to the Ajegunle.org training program, Taiwo had “little knowledge” of the Internet but the training exposed him to the fundamentals of computing. He is also quick to add that sessions on using Microsoft Excel and Adobe Photoshop have proved extremely useful in his post-training life. He learnt more about the Internet and its use for “research, networking and learning more about the ICT sector” and has now continued on to learn about web development. “Whenever I sit to think about the future, I feel relaxed and my thought is always positive because of the skills that I have acquired – and the kind of network I have created”, Taiwo adds. “Anytime I now see opportunity, I smile because I know that the skills acquired and the experience I have working as an intern with DHL International and Uncommon Man Network will put me ahead of others”. His new-found confidence, like many other trainees, shone though when he said, “boldness, courage and improved communication are my major gifts from Ajegunle.org”. Taiwo now volunteers as coordinator of the Ajegunle.org Alumni Network.





# Our Partners

These stories of transformed lives are made possible through the kind support of our board, staff, partners, volunteers and others. We thank you for your kind support, and look forward to working with you towards weaving more stories from Ajegunle and other communities! As the chapters unfold, we will highlight our other stakeholders - but in this chapter, we wish to specifically thank the following partners who have supported through grants or internship placements.

## *Grant (Community Technology Skills Program)*

**Microsoft Nigeria**

## *Internship Placements*

**Afrinvest West Africa**

**British High Commission**

**DHL Nigeria**

**First City Monument Bank**

**HoneySuckles**

**London Metropolitan University**

**Lornamead Africa**

**Nigerian Bottling Company PLC**

**Standard Chartered Bank**

**UK Trade & Investment**

**Echoes From Ajegunle** comes to you courtesy of **Paradigm Initiative Nigeria**. For more information about our social intervention projects and how to partner with us, please visit [www.pinigeria.org](http://www.pinigeria.org) and/or write to [info@pinigeria.org](mailto:info@pinigeria.org). We look forward to your feedback on this chapter, **'Stories of transformed lives'**. The next chapter unfolds shortly!