

ECHOES FROM
LIFE



About our LIFE Program

Welcome to the Echoes From L.I.F.E Magazine, Paradigm Initiative's annual bulletin highlighting impact stories of both present and past participants of the Life skills, ICTs, Financial literacy, and Entrepreneurship dubbed L.I.F.E. Program. As an integral part of our work to creating a digitally inclusive Africa, the L.I.F.E program equips young Africans living in under-served communities with demand-driven ICT and Entrepreneurship skills and connects them to internships, online work or entrepreneurial ventures with a high possibility of earning immediate and sustainable income.



The LIFE Program Team



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Program Manager.

“The aim of L.I.F.E is to reduce poverty and unemployment among young people in Africa”



Emmanuel Bida Thomas - South Sudan

"I have been able to provide training to groups of people, create social media content and simple graphics, run social media ads at ease and also navigate the Google Workspace."

- Emmanuel Bida Thomas

I joined the LIFE Virtual training program in 2021 when I was a student and also an associate editor at 211check.org. I got to know about the LIFE program through a Facebook advert. The Facebook ad for the LIFE program popped on my timeline, and then I registered via the Google Form.

The LIFE program syllabus attracted me to apply for the program. The list of topics was something I needed to fill my skills gap, and I just did that. I am passionate about both technology and education, making learning my absolute hobby. I felt excited that the team at Paradigm Initiative gave my registration for the training due consideration and selected me for the program. It has been a game changer for me since then.

The most surprising was the fact that the program is self-paced. We go through the resources at our convenience. The trainers gave assignments, graded them and provided feedback. It took away the challenges of a bad internet network which were imminent if the training was done via live sessions.

I gained essential skills in Google Productivity Tools, Basic Graphics Design, Social Media Management, Email Marketing, Content Marketing, and Fundamentals of Digital Literacy. These skills have gone a long way in helping me, and those within my circle do hassle-free tech-related work. I have been able to provide training to groups of people, create social media content and simple graphics, run social media ads at

ease and also navigate the Google Workspace. My work has been very organized since then, and I can easily provide references.

Furthermore, before the program, I have been facing challenges doing Graphics Design and also getting business profiles verified on Google My Business (GMB), but with the introduction of Canva to me through the training, I can now do simple social media posters I need for my work without the need to pay a graphics designer. At the training, they also introduced us to Google Partners. I have recommended willing organizations in South Sudan who now have their businesses verified on the Google My Business platform.

Somehow, my financial situation has improved because I got retained at my job and continue to work at 211check.org as the Associate Editor. The retention is because of the level of professionalism and quality I have been able to exhibit in my role. Read more about my work here: <https://211check.org/emmanuel-bida-associate-editor/>

I am proud of the fact that I have become tech-savvy and also a social media guru. A lot of people consult me on social media-related issues. This excites me because I cannot imagine people believing that I can always be of help to them.

I also work as the Project Coordinator for 211 Check at DEFY HATE NOW (DHN).



Fatima Muftau - Nigeria

"The main reason I joined this program was to boost my soft and hard skills. The program helped me overcome my biggest challenge - self-doubt. I realized I can do whatever goals I set with intention and zeal."

- Fatima Muftau

I read about the LIFE program from a Facebook post. I went further to search on the Paradigm Initiative website and got the full information about the program. According to the information on the website, I understood that the LIFE training is an opportunity for young people to learn relevant digital skills that will connect them to opportunities in this digital economy. So I immediately applied.

I was thrilled when I was selected to participate in the program. Being my first time enrolled in a virtual program, it was a great experience. The teaching method and the attention they gave us from the start to the end of the program were amazing.

The main reason I joined this program was to boost my soft and hard skills, especially within the digital space. I was able to achieve this in the LIFE virtual training program. The program

helped me overcome my biggest challenge, which was self-doubt. This program made me realize I can do whatever goals I set with intention and zeal. Thanks to the life skill lecture I received at the training.

Furthermore, some of the skills I got through the LIFE program have been beneficial for my professional and academic endeavours. These skills include; Proficiency with Google productivity tools and Graphic design skills. I am very proud to have developed these digital skills, which are a need in this day and age.

I am currently a Program Associate/Intern at TransparencIT NG. Thanks to Paradigm Initiative for creating a unique opportunity like this for people to be able to learn and explore the digital space.



Alex Kawooya - Uganda

"A few months after the training, I was chosen as the branch alternative deliverable channels champion at my workplace. Currently, I have been promoted to Banking Supervisor at the Bank of Baroda, Uganda."

- Alex Kawooya

I was thrilled to be granted the chance to take part in the LIFE virtual training since it gave me the chance to learn fresh skills that will benefit my career and profession. When I joined the training, I was a Banking Assistant at the Bank of Baroda, Uganda.

The LIFE virtual training was great because, in addition to learning how to use digital tools, we also received instruction in digital marketing and life skills. I gained a lot of knowledge from the training, including effective communications, public speaking, digital marketing, and how to use digital tools and platforms effectively. During the training, I did new things I never believed I could do before. Like using Canva and Photoshop to create designs.

Now I comfortably use these digital tools in my profession to develop documents and efficiently capture customer data in spreadsheets. These abilities have improved how I perform my duties at work. A few months after the training, I was chosen as the branch alternative deliverable channels champion at my workplace. Currently, I have been promoted to Banking Supervisor at the Bank of Baroda, Uganda.

The LIFE program has not only been a great benefit to me but has also to those around me because I have been transferring the knowledge to them. I have been teaching others how to use some of the digital tools I learned from the program.



Henry Omofunwa - Nigeria

"With the skills I got from the program, I have become a valuable software engineer and Freelancer to startups in Nigeria and outside the shores."

- Henry Omofunwa

My biggest challenge before the program was trying to find my purpose in life and improve my financial situation. While awaiting admission into a higher institution of learning, I was working part-time in a factory. Then I heard about the LIFE program from a close friend of mine. I wanted to acquire skills, and the LIFE program was the perfect place to get such a skill for free.

The most surprising thing about the LIFE program was how they managed to impact us with different hard and soft skills. At the program, I learned web development with WordPress and got basic knowledge of programming languages like Javascript and PHP. These skills helped me to become a software engineer.

This program has improved my financial status to

heights I couldn't even imagine. With the skills I got from the program, I have been able to become a valuable software engineer and Freelancer to startups in Nigeria and abroad. So far, I have worked with Odigital, Nitax Technologies Limited, Mastercard, The People Practice, and Sterling bank.

I am so proud of these achievements because society use to make me believe that I would not be able to get a well-paying job without a higher institution degree. But thanks to the LIFE program, I have been able to prove this wrong. I have worked in top companies as a top-level developer in my field while pursuing a degree in computer science at Yaba College of Technology (YabaTech) Lagos, Nigeria.



Praise Offeh - Nigeria

"Ah yes, my financial situation has improved. I get gigs from clients, I get to teach design to students and get paid, I also have a YouTube channel."

- Praise Offeh

I was a recent secondary school graduate when I enrolled in the LIFE program. Before joining the program, I was assisting my mum at her shop and one day my best friend, a beneficiary of the LIFE program in 2019 informed me about the program. I was fascinated with what I heard, so I applied and got accepted into the training the same year.

During the LIFE training, I couldn't operate a computer well, I had basic knowledge, but the training increased my computer knowledge. Through the LIFE program, I became a graphics designer with the skills I gained from the training, and after the program, I continued to work on enhancing my skills through practising and more training.

Being a graphic designer is something I never imagined I'd be, but I'm glad I have that skill. I'm a freelancer, and I can say I make money from designing. Ah yes, my financial situation has improved. I get gigs from clients, I get to teach design to students and get paid, I have a YouTube channel where I share my design knowledge, and I've worked in a design agency as a graphic designer.

An achievement I am most proud of is winning a scholarship to study brand identity design with Geneza school of design and getting certified.

I am currently a Brand identity/packaging/graphic designer and a Voiceover artist.



Michael-Ipinko Tosin Israel - Nigeria

"The ICT lessons laid the foundation for my career path and my education. I currently major in computer science at the University."

- Michael-Ipinko Tosin Israel

After completing his secondary school education, Michael decided to postpone taking the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination to learn a skill before enrolling in a University.

"I have always been interested in ICT, but learning it seemed like a far-fetched dream at the time, unlike a child wanting to be an astronaut. I attempted to teach myself the fundamentals, but there was only so much I could accomplish on my own. Not so long after my trial and error stage, a very good pal of mine contacted me and told me about the LIFE program. He emphasized the benefits and what I stood to gain, which was ridiculously too good to be true because it was Completely Free!! The benefits heightened my interest in the program. However, that feeling was nothing compared to how I felt after receiving the news that I had been selected to participate in the program. I was ecstatic beyond measure and ready to go. #letsGetThis.

Call me crazy, but joining the LIFE program made me feel like a cheater of some sort. How can so much be given to me for free? It exceeded my expectations in every way. I learnt excellent life and people skills that I continue to apply today. The ICT lessons laid the foundation for my career path and my education. I currently major in computer science at the University.

As a result of the skills I acquired from this program, my financial situation improved. I landed jobs, participated in internships, and started a new business with a couple of friends that had also previously completed the LIFE program. I am not quite there yet, but I am well on to realizing my astronaut-like ambitions.

I am currently a freelance software engineer. Also, I am an undergraduate computer science student at the University of Ibadan."



Felix Ndidì - Nigeria

"I was able to take on more complex projects and deliver solutions to clients due to my enhanced skill set."

- Felix Ndidì

Ndidì Felix participated in the LIFE program in the year 2019. He learned about the program through a friend who is an alumnus of the Program.

"Before joining the LIFE program in 2019, I was learning graphic design and printing. I left the graphics and printing training to join the LIFE program because of the wide range of skills and learning opportunities the LIFE program offered at no cost."

At the LIFE program, I improved more in my graphics designing skill. I learned new graphic design styles and packages. In addition to this, I gained lots of knowledge in web development.

My experience and opportunities have expanded

due to the skills I acquired in the LIFE program. I was able to take on more complex projects and deliver solutions to clients as a result of my enhanced skill set, it also allowed me to try out more freelance gigs, which increased my financial horizon.

After the LIFE program, I felt confident in my ICT skills, and I immediately registered for an online data science course and was accepted after clearing the screening trials. After completing the training with a series of exams and projects, I was awarded a certificate.

I am a freelance graphic designer, backend developer and data analyst."



Abigail Uzorwunne - Nigeria

"Now I know how to source for opportunities but mostly create one if I don't find them."

- Abigail Uzorwunne

Abigail joined the LIFE program three years after her secondary school education. Before the program, she was just a teenager who knew what she wanted but needed to get and hone the required skill set to perform at the level she envisioned.

"When I was selected to participate in the program, I was elated. The chance to learn and get to know computers was great for me, and to know what an entrepreneur should be and act like was a needed lesson. I learned a lot! From the coding, graphics, social media, entrepreneurship, and life skill classes all that was a whole package, and it has helped me greatly in every area of my advancement. The LIFE program was really interesting, I was surprised that some people care about the growth of young people in under-served communities.

After the program, my life became way better. Now I know how to source for opportunities but mostly create one if I don't find them. In the future, I see myself coming back to give back to this program I learned so much from and create better opportunities for the greater minds to come".

Presently, Abigail is an artiste, a graphics designer, and on a journey to being a programmer. She is studying Mathematics at the Federal University of Technology (FUTO). "I use my graphic design skill to create artwork and designs for music. Also, I use the lessons learnt from the social media and marketing class to devise ways of getting better engagement on my songs. I also design for others and get paid", she said.



Izuchukwu Henry - Nigeria

"I am currently working in an e-commerce company. My employment shows that the world has gone beyond certificates. The focus now is on skills."

- Izuchukwu Henry

After secondary school in 2015, I could not gain admission into a higher institution. I was at home doing nothing. It seemed I lost focus or direction in which my life will go. At a point, I seemed not to have any other choice than to join my mother in her petty business. I stood in for her any time she went out of the shop.

While in my mother's shop, my friend brought the LIFE program flyer to me and told me to join him to go check out the centre. The main reason I agreed to join him to visit the centre was to verify that the training is free. We visited the training centre and confirmed that training is free of charge.

Excitedly, I informed my parents about the LIFE training centre and was encouraged to pick up the application form. I applied, interviewed and was selected among the 35 people for the 2018 Batch B. My parents were not convinced that the training was free of charge, so I invited them

to attend the parents' orientation session to get more clarity.

During the training, I found an interest in digital marketing. Immediately after the ten weeks of training at the Aba LIFE centre, I enrolled for advanced training in digital marketing. I completed the training and started surfing the internet for jobs. I found a digital marketing job on Gada Africa's website after confidently applying for the job, a virtual interview was held. I was successful in the interview and was asked to start immediately. I worked from Aba and later moved to Abuja with an increased salary! I am currently working in an e-commerce company. My employment shows that the world has gone beyond certificates. The focus now is on skills.

Thank you, Paradigm Initiative, for arming me with relevant skills to succeed.



Joshua Erute - Nigeria

"I run my own social media management organization and I am working on a fintech software that allows parents to save and invest for their children automatically."

- Joshua Erute

Before I joined the LIFE program, I was just a sit-at-home secondary school graduate. I heard about the LIFE program from different people in my community. I observed how it had helped so many people get skilled and start earning money with their skills, and work in reputable organizations. The transformation I see in the lives of the LIFE program alumni motivated me to apply for this program.

I gained and learnt a lot from the program. One of the biggest for me includes some entrepreneurial skills, social media management, WordPress website designing and other great skills.

Sometimes, I wondered what would have happened if I hadn't attended the LIFE Program. Today I manage the social media accounts of different big brands across diverse industries (real estate, agro-tech, NGOs, sports, food and restaurants, travel and tours) and nations across the world. My social media skills helped me get a scholarship from one of the companies I work

for. I have successfully hosted over 10 WordPress websites for big brands. From the entrepreneurial skills learnt, I run my own social media management organization and I am working on a fintech software that allows parents to save and invest for their children automatically.

The achievement I am so proud of is organizing and training people on social media management. Additionally, my social media management skill has given me several opportunities to be granted interviewed on the Wake Up Nigeria show by TVC.

Furthermore, since finishing this program, my financial earnings have increased. Sometimes it feels like a dream, but the LIFE program made it possible. All of my income comes largely from the digital skills I learned from the LIFE program such as social media management and WordPress website design. Presently, I consult for different brands on social media management and photography.



Mouhamadou Al Fadel Fall - Senegal

"The biggest challenge I faced before was being financially independent, and the LIFE program helped me a lot to solve this challenge."

- Mouhamadou Al Fadel Fall

My name is Mouhamadou Al Fadel Fall. I participated in the LIFE program in 2022. I was studying before joining the LIFE program. After obtaining my baccalaureate diploma (WAEC), I wanted to train in computer science, which I have always been passionate about. So a friend told me that there is an organization called Paradigm Initiative that provides free computer training and put me in touch with them. I then joined the program to discover more about the digital world. When I was informed of my admission, I was happy and surprised by the quality of the training after only four weeks.

Thanks to the LIFE program, I mastered Microsoft Office software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and Design software (photoshop, illustrator). These

skills helped me a lot in my studies. Also, they allowed me to make my intrusion into the professional world as a graphics designer. With these skills, I feel financially independent: I make posters, business cards, membership cards, flyers, and logos. All these activities are new sources of profit and I started my business 'DIWAAN TECH,' with a friend from the same LIFE training cohort.

The biggest challenge I faced before was being financially independent, and the LIFE program helped me a lot to solve this challenge. Currently, I am in my first year at the virtual university of Senegal studying web and mobile development, and I am getting better at graphics design.



Ndeye Seyni Fall - Senegal

"I am fully versed in office automation and ready for the secretary position. I am proud that I mastered Photoshop and office automation, and I can help others with these newly acquired skills."

- Ndeye Seyni Fall

I attended the LIFE training in 2022 with the 2nd cohort. Before joining the program, I was a shopkeeper. I own a shop that sells fabrics and cosmetics. It was one of my clients who told me about the LIFE program. I did the training because I wanted to learn more about IT. I always wanted to be a secretary but didn't know enough about office automation, and I had failed the Baccalaureate (WAEC), so I couldn't go to formal higher education.

When I found out I was selected, I was super happy and couldn't wait for the training to begin.

Thanks to the LIFE training, I made the report cards for the students of the Sanguin 1 Primary School using Excel. Many teachers don't know how to use Word and other such software, so I decided to help them make these report cards for free. I also created the logo and poster for my shop. I'm very grateful to the Paradigm Initiative team because now I'm fully versed in office automation and ready for the secretary position. I'm proud that I mastered Photoshop and office automation, and I can help others with these newly acquired skills.



Mouhamadou Moustapha Ndiaye - Senegal

"I am making achievements with my graphic design skills. Two of my batchmates and I set up a company - Diwaan Technology, and we recently received start-up capital through editing and design services."

- Mouhamadou Moustapha Ndiaye

My name is Mouhamadou Moustapha Ndiaye, I participated in the LIFE program in 2022 with the 2nd cohort. Before joining the LIFE program, I was a high school student. After the baccalaureate, I was looking for training. It was then that I heard about the LIFE program, and I registered for the program. I have long wanted to do computer training that's why I seized this opportunity with Paradigm Initiative.

When I learned that I had been selected, I was elated. The graphics design course particularly surprised me because it allowed me to make my models and designs without the help of anyone. Through the LIFE training, I acquired skills in digital literacy, office automation and visual design. With

the acquisition of these skills, I have managed to work with quite a few people in certain areas of IT.

My financial situation has improved greatly because I am making achievements with my graphic design skills. After doing the entrepreneurship module, two of my batchmates and I thought of setting up a company called Diwaan Technology. We haven't achieved much yet but recently managed to collect a small start-up capital through editing and design services.

Currently, I am in my first year at the Virtual University of Senegal, studying mobile applications, web development and gaming.



Ndeye Bator Dione - Senegal

"The skills I learned gave me confidence."

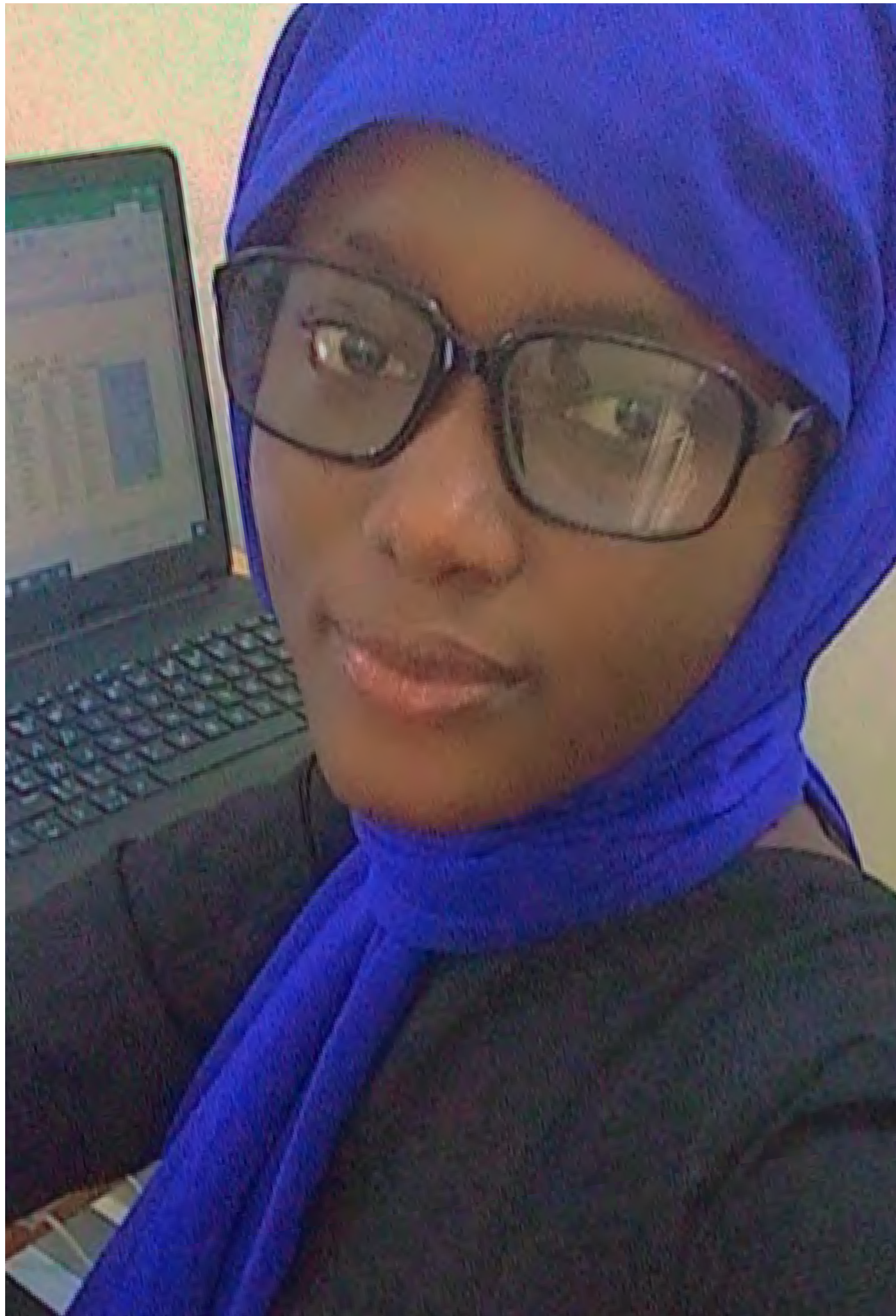
- Ndeye Bator Dione

I attended the LIFE training in 2022. I was a cosmetics salesperson. I learned about the training through Facebook, and I wanted to do it to have more knowledge about the digital world. When I was told that I had been selected, I felt a lot of joy and happiness. What surprised me the most about the program is the familiarity, the generosity and the smooth running of the lessons.

Through the training, I acquired digital knowledge and life lessons. The skills I learned gave me confidence. The graphic design skills I learned allowed me to create flyers and logos.

Additionally, the training improved my knowledge of digital productivity tools.

The biggest challenge I faced before the LIFE training was finding it hard to find work. But right now, I've been able to challenge those hurdles. I am particularly grateful to Paradigm Initiative because the LIFE training allowed me to find work, and I have been interviewed to achieve my goals at the entrepreneurship centre in Thiès. In addition, I am currently running seminars on telemarketing and customer service.



Hadjara Ndione - Senegal

"Thanks to the entrepreneurship training we received in the program, this improved my entrepreneurial skills."

- Hadjara Ndione

When I joined the LIFE program, I had just gotten my baccalaureate (WAEC) and was selling cosmetics. A friend told me about the training, and I wanted to do it to better understand and use the computer. I was very honored to have been chosen among the participants.

I was surprised by the freedom we had in the program to gain experience and better understand life skills and how to use digital tools. In this training, I acquired a lot of skills. Now I can use digital tools Like Microsoft word to create documents, PowerPoint to create presentations, and Excel spreadsheet to calculate income. In addition, I got graphics design skills, which I can

use to create posters etc.

Before the training, I had goals but lacked the courage to pursue them. However, thanks to the program, this anxiety disappeared, and I am now fully working on my projects. This life skill training has helped me get to know myself better and increased my self-confidence. Thanks to the entrepreneurship training we received in the program as it has improved my entrepreneurial skills. I have branded my cosmetics business, I am seeing better results than what I used to get before the LIFE program.



Mamadou Thiam - Senegal

"The achievement of which I am most proud is the Al Amzali company that I created during the training."

- Mamadou Thiam

I was a welder and boilermaker before the LIFE training. I found out about the training through my uncle, who signed me up and then I was called for the interviews. I wanted to do the training to have the experience and build my own business. I was very happy to have been selected. When we started the classes, my interest increased because the classes were interesting.

What surprised me the most in the training was the entrepreneurship component that allowed me to have new knowledge that I use until now.

Through the LIFE program, I learned how to operate a computer, download videos, music and other things I had to pay other people to do

for me before now. It also allowed me to learn more about the internet. After the training, I did an internship with Remuneration. Currently, I work in the workshop of my older brother, who is in the construction business of producing agricultural machinery.

The achievement of which I am most proud is the Al Amzali company that I created during the training. The business is about selling machines and various welding materials. The training allowed me to start the process of setting up my business. Before, I was just collecting training certificates and sitting still, but with LIFE Program, it allowed me to be more active.



Ahmadou Kabir Faye - Senegal

"After the training, I expanded my business a bit with the posters I was able to create. It made advertising easier."

- Ahmadou Kabir Faye

My name is Ahmadou Kabir Faye, and I participated in the LIFE training in 2021 with the 1st cohort. I had seen the poster of the call for applications in a WhatsApp group and inquired for more information.

What prompted me to join the program is that I saw that it was essential to my daily life. When I learned that I was selected, I felt content. What surprised me the most was that there were no monthly instalments to pay, which is rare for training like this.

Thanks to the LIFE program, I acquired skills in Word, Excel, Design and entrepreneurship, and with these skills, I improved my knowledge in IT and entrepreneurship.

After the training, I expanded my business a bit with the posters I was able to create. It made advertising easier because before the training, I couldn't use a computer properly, and it was hard for me to improve my financial situation. However, the program helped me to know how to work with the computer and also master entrepreneurship skills that have enabled me to advance in my business. Currently, I have a shop that sells fabric.

About Paradigm Initiative

Paradigm Initiative works to connect underserved young Africans with digital opportunities, and ensures protection of their rights.

Across our regional offices in Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe and beyond, we work to connect under-served African youth with improved livelihoods through our digital inclusion and digital rights programs. Our programs include the Life Skills, ICT, Financial Readiness, Entrepreneurship (LIFE) training program, Dufuna and a digital rights program.

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