Technology and Employment Inclusion in Marginalised Contexts

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Context

Technological advancements are disrupting labour markets globally, with digital platforms expanding gig work and simplifying talent acquisition. Yet, **there is limited insight into how these shifts affect marginalized groups in Nigeria, particularly Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and women in disadvantaged communities.**

The Young Nigeria Works (YNW) program is fundamentally driven by technology, with a mandate to support work transitions for approximately 175,000 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) over the next four years. To achieve this, it is crucial to assess how these groups engage with technology for training and employment, and identify what works within their specific contexts.

Findings from this research will inform more inclusive YNW programming and policy, while identifying opportunities to strengthen existing technology-driven initiatives that support work transitions for marginalised groups in Nigeria.

Persistent data gaps pose challenges to designing effective programs for marginalised groups.

85% of schools in Nigeria are not accessible to Persons with Disabilities, 61% aged 13-18 are significantly more likely to be out of school.

63% of persons with disabilities lack training and related employability skills

Despite systemic and infrastructural gaps, marginalized groups leverage limited digital access to pursue online opportunities, highlighting the potential of improved connectivity for economic inclusion.

Barriers affecting meaningful digital engagements for marginalised populations

Women in Disadvantaged communities & Displaced Persons

1. Limited internet connectivity,
2. Geographic isolation
3. Mobility restrictions
4. Discriminatory social norms
5. Education and skills Gaps
6. Societal censorship/ restrictions to internet usage
7. Limited education and digital skills
8. Low smartphone ownership

PWDs

1. Exclusionary platform design
2. Limited localised assistive technologies
3. High costs of assistive tools
4. Inaccessible learning environments
5. Social discrimination

22 year-old social media manager/ content creator, in a remote community in Enugu State

"I sometimes have to travel to another location daily just to get strong internet connectivity, this makes me feel very much excluded from the society"

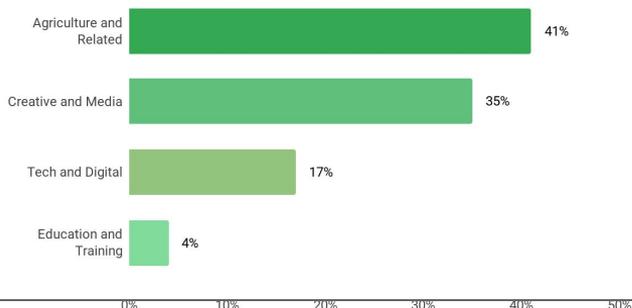**33 year old Arts and Craft Practitioner/ Kano IDP Settlement**

We cannot go to the market,but we receive cap orders from other states like Sokoto and Katsina. We give them to interstate drivers along with the client's phone number, and follow up with calls from our phones

Faced with persistent barriers to formal employment, marginalised populations often turn to self-employment and part-time work fueling a growing preference for entrepreneurial development.

Most self-employed women in marginalized communities work in creative/media (55%) and agriculture (38%). Creative/media also accounts for 40% of full-time and 39% of part-time roles, followed by tech (28%) in part-time work.

What type of work or business are you currently engaged in?

Sector	Percentage
Agriculture and Related	41%
Creative and Media	35%
Tech and Digital	17%
Education and Training	4%

7% of women in rural areas currently work in tech compared to 16% in urban settings.

Inclusive hiring is more prevalent in Agriculture and Creative sectors

Sector	Percentage
Agriculture	35.94%
Creative	28.13%
ICT	9.38%
Manufacturing	4.69%
Advertising	2.34%
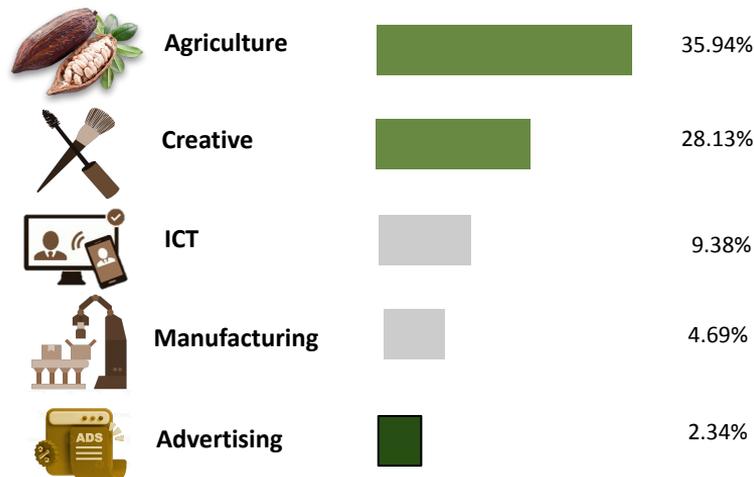
An Evolving Trend in Displaced Settlements in Northern Nigeria- *'Tech Connectors' are supporting digital inclusion by extending learning opportunities to peers without digital access.*
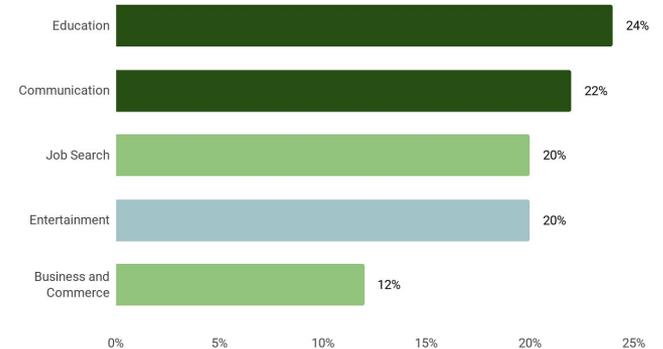
Although smartphone ownership among displaced women especially in Northern Nigeria is low, some young women in IDP settlements are emerging as 'tech-connectors' leveraging low-tech social media platforms to improve their arts and crafts skills, while actively driving communal learning and expanded market access within the camps.

Conversely, basic phone ownership is high among women in IDP settlements at over 90%—with a majority leveraging calls and text messaging to expand market access and strengthen customer engagement.

What do you use the internet for?

Category	Percentage
Education	24%
Communication	22%
Job Search	20%
Entertainment	20%
Business and Commerce	12%

Across the country, IDPs rely on NGOs and religious institutions for skills development, but with declining support and high costs, *36% cannot afford vocational training.* Among those with internet access, **24% are engaging in online learning and 20% in digital job search.**

Across digital platforms, WhatsApp is reshaping income and employment opportunities for women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) with limited digital access and literacy through its simple, accessible features.

44% of women secured jobs

Low-data usage

Social networking

High contrast themes

Screen-reader support

55% of PWDs secured jobs

31% successful client acquisition

"**WhatsApp is considered the most socially acceptable digital platform for women in traditional settings for its low data use, simple design, and controlled visibility within familiar networks.**

WhatsApp's key accessibility features drive high engagement among PWDs. However, its use for business remains low, with only a 16% client acquisition rate from current marketing efforts.

Digital platforms are enabling a shift from dependency to digital-driven independence for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) by providing pathways to learning, employment, and economic participation.

Among Persons with Disabilities with internet access, several emerging trends are driving greater digital engagement and inclusion.

Perceived employer bias pushing PWDs towards remote work

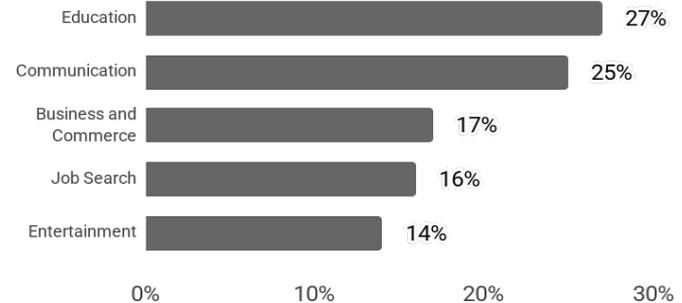**Digital concealment of disabilities enabling 'fairer' evaluation in remote hiring**

Shifts from traditional sectors to tech-enabled sectors especially remote work

Assistive technologies and accessibility features supporting more Inclusive learning models & ease of doing business online

68% use Jobberman to job hunt with 21% success rate; LinkedIn shows a similar gap (52% vs. 15%).. Although placement rates remain modest, access to jobtech platforms signals growing potential for inclusion and improved employment outcomes for PWDs

What do you use the internet for?

Category	Percentage
Education	27%
Communication	25%
Business and Commerce	17%
Job Search	16%
Entertainment	14%

Structural barriers to traditional education make online learning a vital pathway for PWDS, constituting their topmost internet activity with business management skills and advanced digital skills as top skilling areas.

While marginalized communities increasingly leverage technology to improve outcomes, adoption in hiring varies across regions and inclusivity remains limited

48% of employers in Northern Nigeria use technology in their hiring process of marginalized populations
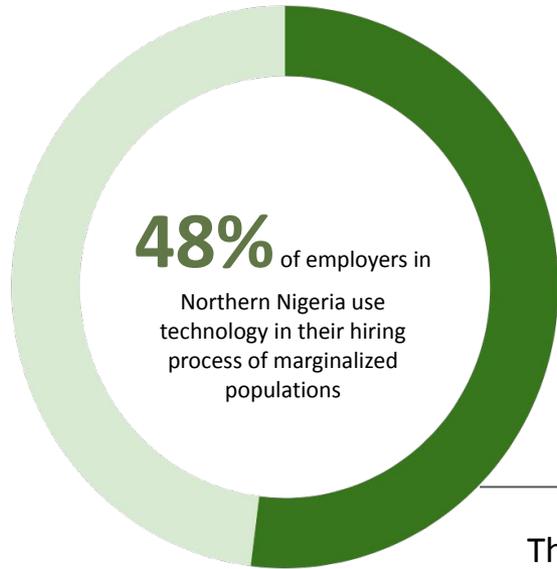
Only **3%** of employers in the North use specialised job boards for hiring from marginalised groups **79%** use social media and referrals

53% of employers in the South use online assessments and automation but not specifically tailored to inclusive hiring.

The limited use of job boards is driven by:

Awareness gaps

Low smartphone adoption in marginalised communities

Informal Hiring Practices

Employers generally support DEI in Principle but Cost Barriers and Lack of Intentional Inclusion efforts undermine Hiring of Marginalized Groups

Nearly *9 in 10* employers don't *actively* recruit from marginalised groups

About **72%** of employers in the formal sector report not making any intentional efforts towards inclusion

Reasons Employers don't hire from Marginalised Communities

Persons with Disabilities

Skill Assessment Issues	51%
High Cost of Accomodation	23%
Engagement Challenges	19%
Lack of accessible infrastructure	8%

Women in Hard-To-Reach Communities

Logistics and Transportation	32%
Limited Access to Technology	33%
Lack of Skills	28%
Cultural Barriers	16%

Internally Displaced Persons

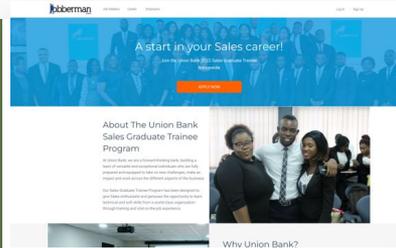|	
Logistics and Transportation	36%
Cultural Barriers	28%
Lack of skills and qualifications	20%
Limited Access to Technology	16%

Enabling Inclusion: What Employers Across Regions Say They Need

28%
of employers in Southern Nigeria cite the need for subsidized inclusivity training to better engage marginalized jobseekers.

27%
of Southern employers highlight the need for better access to inclusive recruitment platforms to improve hiring from marginalized communities.

→

55%
of Northern employers, prioritize partnerships with NGOs to support inclusive hiring efforts.

16%
of employers in Northern Nigeria see public recognition as a primary incentive for inclusive hiring.

Recommendations

01

Engagement

   a.   Integrate Low-tech platforms like WhatsApp into the user journey to provide post-training support, share job updates, and engage targeted groups through dedicated channels.

   b.   Prioritize human interaction over automated bots to strengthen platform credibility and foster a personalized and memorable experience.

   c.   Secure male buy-in to support women's participation in rural areas, while limiting direct male involvement in engagements due to cultural sensitivities.
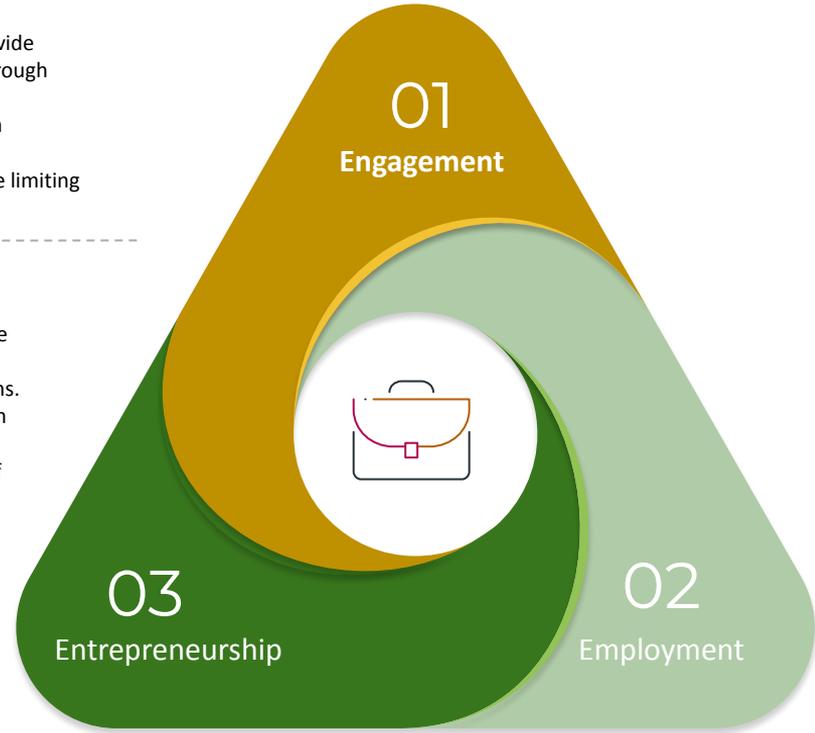
02

Employment- Workforce Development

a.   Advocate inclusive hiring processes ensuring reasonable accommodations, such as accessible interview formats, assistive technologies, and flexible work arrangements are made

b.   Offer mentorship and career coaching for PwDs to boost confidence and job applications.

c.   Encourage disability-focused job fairs and networking events to connect employers with talented PwDs in a more supportive environment.

d.   Promote awareness and educate employers on best hiring practices and the benefits of gender-inclusive recruitment and diverse leadership.

03

Entrepreneurship / Enterprise Development

a.   Provide digital marketing and social media management skills training for entrepreneurs to scale their businesses.

b.   Promote awareness of digital platforms and their economic benefits to drive adoption

c.   Establish digital skill acquisition centres tailored to the needs of specific marginalised group in rural and urban settings.

d.   Promote awareness of digital platforms and their economic benefits to drive adoption.

01 **Engagement**

03 Entrepreneurship

02 Employment