

# Youth For Technology Foundation Owerri Digital Village



## BACKGROUND

Access to appropriate technology is costly and inaccessible to most rural areas in the developing world. Although children in these areas may be aware of technology such as computers, they often do not have the equipment or skills to use them. This is where **Youth for Technology (YTF)** is making a difference.

Established in 2000, YTF is an international non-profit organization dedicated to two main goals. The first is teaching youth about their communities and the world through the use of technology. The second is providing basic computer skills and expanding upon those



*"I want to be an entrepreneur. Leadership is one of the essential skills of an entrepreneur. The TechTeens program at the Owerri Digital Village helped me acquire the confidence, leadership, and communication skills to reach my goals."*

**- Dozie, YTF program member**

skills for potential use in the workplace as well as in their communities. Over the past 8 years, YTF has worked with other non-profit organizations to create community technology and learning centers, known as Digital Villages, in rural communities on the African continent.



## SITUATION

Owerri, Imo State was selected as the location for the premier YTF Digital Village in Nigeria in 2001. The Southeastern region continues to suffer the effects of the Biafran war of 1967. There are very few individuals in leadership roles from this region in Nigeria. Like most of the southeastern region, Owerri has been monetarily neglected and underserved in many areas including that of technology infusion. Infrastructure development and provisions for this area remain a very low priority for the Nigerian government. Digital telephone lines are limited, only one Internet Service Provider exists and in fact, there is very little electricity. YTF's Digital Village is working to empower the people of Owerri through development of this rural area by facilitating access to information, creating learning resources and improving communications technology.

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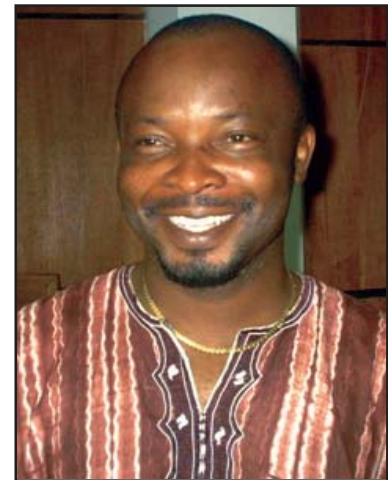


## OWERRI DIGITAL VILLAGE

The Owerri Digital Village has created an after school educational enrichment program that complements the education provided by schools. It has contributed to greater numbers of disadvantaged youth graduating from secondary schools and enrolling in universities, with a substantial number pursuing careers in science, business, technology or engineering. It has also promoted rural community development by providing technical,

educational and entrepreneurial skills training to disadvantaged individuals in an effort to create social and economic opportunities. These opportunities have the potential to change peoples' lives and transform communities. Perhaps most importantly, it has served as a scalable and replicable model for organizations interested in establishing similar centers in their rural communities. Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), youth in Owerri have been able to positively impact their community. Their knowledge has been used to facilitate project-based learning and inspire collaborative learning to enable participants to apply their skills in meaningful initiatives that improve the economic well-being of the community. Access to technology and information can expand opportunities for youth in farming communities by providing them with resources on how to grow their family's income base through sustainable businesses including farming and petty trading.

The Owerri Digital Village serves youth primarily between the ages of 8 and 25 years of age, as they are quick learners with the longest productivity horizon. The center serves young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by technology. Because technology is still not a core component of the Nigerian educational system, most of the youth participants are recruited from local, primary, secondary and university institutions in the Owerri vicinity.



*"YTF encourages teamwork. The Young Scientists and Engineers Tele-Academy allowed me to collaborate with my digital peers from around the world on a real issue facing my community today, HIV/AIDS."*

**- Kennedy, YTF  
program member**

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Ultimately, they will educate others in their village with their knowledge and improve the income base of additional families. In time, the entire village will benefit from this knowledge and through its development, the community will prosper. Since the inception of the Owerri Digital Village, YTF has successfully mobilized financial support from international donors and partners, as well as the state government. However, YTF realizes it is critical to incorporate demand driven services as a part of the revenue

generating model. Such services include meeting the needs of local businesses through the provision of auxiliary services such as photocopying, telephone, fax, word processing and lamination.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

There are many ways for individuals and businesses to contribute to YTF's work. We need your financial support to continue the very important work that we do. YTF is always looking for donations of time and talent.

For more information on how you can work with YTF to help rural communities overcome challenges and reach the potential within each of them, please contact us at [ytf@youthfortechology.org](mailto:ytf@youthfortechology.org) or visit the "**Get Involved**" page on the **YTF website**.

**Thank you for giving generously!**