

Constructing Futures

Case study: Moses Nelson



This image was produced as part of the Youth Forward initiative in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.
© Moses Nelson/ODI/PhotoVoice 2017

Constructing Futures is a youth-focused participatory project that explores the aspirations of young people working in Ghana's construction sector

The project involved training 10 young Ghanaians in photography so that they could use photos to share their experiences of learning a trade in Ghana's construction sector.

The photographs and their accompanying stories give an insight into their motivations for joining the sector, the challenges they have faced accessing training and meaningful employment, and their aspirations for the future. This case study profiles **Moses Nelson**, one of the 10 project participants.

Constructing Futures was carried out in collaboration with PhotoVoice, with participants selected from Global Communities' Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE) programme. YIEDIE forms part of the Youth Forward initiative, a partnership led by the Mastercard Foundation.

Moses moved to Takoradi from rural Ghana in 2017 to undertake a training placement in welding. Following his six-month training period, he found employment with a construction company working in the Shama region. Moses is currently looking for similar employment with a commercial company, in order to save money to open his own welding business.

‘Most of the youth from villages around the Agona Nkwanta region move to the city in search of jobs, as there is little work in the country. They end up staying with friends and strangers who they rely on for support. Most of them become engaged in petty trades like phone credit retail and market trading as they lack the financial support to enter into a sector like construction.’



This image was produced as part of the Youth Forward initiative in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. © Moses Nelson/ODI/PhotoVoice 2017

I did not have a proper job before I moved into construction. After leaving school at the end of year six, I was reliant on my father, who I lived with and who took care of me. I have six younger siblings and I therefore had to drop out of school to work on my father's small-scale cocoa farm, in order to support the family.

In Ghana's countryside, young people mostly work in farming, either informally by helping tend to their families' land, or by providing labour to other peoples' rice, palm or cocoa farms. I wanted to do something more than farming and intended to move to the capital, Accra, to learn a trade and find work. Many of my friends and other young people in the area had done the same, and so it seemed like the obvious route into employment and to earning money.



Back in my hometown,
I simply would not
have had the
opportunity to
learn a trade

In early 2017 I heard an announcement at the local community centre – an organisation called YIEDIE was offering support for young people to help them move into the construction sector. I informed my father and asked for his permission to take part in the programme. He was supportive and I went to the Shama district to register. I was called back the following day and placed with a Master. Our farm is in another district from the

Master's workshop – I therefore moved to greater Takoradi to begin my placement in March 2017.

Under my Master, I worked in welding. Growing up, I had always been interested in metal work and I was fortunate to be given my preferred choice by YIEDIE. Back in my hometown, I simply would not have had the opportunity to learn a trade; some people do work in construction in rural areas, but mostly as unskilled labourers. The cities in Ghana offer more opportunities and, so like me, many young people move there for employment. Few come back after they have learnt a trade, and those who do only do so to visit their families, rather than return permanently. There just isn't the demand or customers necessary to move back and find work or set up a business.

After training with my Master for six months, I completed my placement in August 2017. I had planned to leave my Master as soon as I completed the placement, so that I could find paid work. However, some people came and contracted me through my Master for a large welding job, building a factory in the Shama region. I worked on this job for one month. It was hard work but it paid well and I was able to earn 50 Cedis (£7.80) a day, which is good money. I worked six days a week and was paid each week, receiving 300 Cedis from which I was able to

save 200 Cedis, sending 50 Cedis back home to help support my siblings.

Currently, I am out of work and have not worked since the factory job one month ago. While I was there, I met someone who was going to work on another large job on the Cape Coast and offered me work there, so I am waiting on that call. I want to use the money I saved during the factory job specifically for opening my own welding business. To save for this, I do not spend on day-to-day living and am therefore reliant on friends and neighbours, while I wait for the Cape Coast contract.

However, I am not worried as it is easy to find work. I acquired a certificate as a result of the training and this makes the process easier – I am not searching but instead waiting for a job to come to me. I have had other welding job offers but I declined them so that I can wait for a better job in terms of money and conditions. Welding is not an easy job and it comes with a lot of risks. The grinding machine is dangerous and if you or your colleagues do not handle it correctly, you can get badly cut. Your eyes are vulnerable to particles and sparks when using the welding torch, which could seriously damage you and put you out of work. This is why YIEDIE's provision of safety clothing is so important, yet the risks still exist every day that you work. As a



'In the near future, my dream is to set up my own welding shop and employ and train others in the workshop. First, I need to find appropriate land to buy or rent – by the roadside with lots of passing clients is a good location. The next step is to buy the machinery and materials that I need for the workshop. From the contract jobs I have secured since I completed my welding placement and training in August 2017, I have already been able to start saving for this future.'

This image was produced as part of the Youth Forward initiative in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.
© Moses Nelson/ODI/PhotoVoice 2017



I am content and excited about the future. I have acquired a new skill and feel confident that I will always be able to find work

result, I expect to be paid well and it is why I look for work with employers who have high safety standards.

For the time being, while I wait for a job, I have moved back to my community so that I can live nearer my family and stay for free in a neighbour's vacant house.

In general, I am content and excited about the future. I have acquired a new skill and feel confident that I will always be able to find work. I have also expanded my skillset to metal bending, meaning that if the market for welding slows, I have this as a fall back. I know people

that went to school and continued their studies into senior high school – today, they are not working. I have a trade, and this makes me secure.

My plan is to grow my own business and work independently as a welder. With the money I have already saved, I anticipate that I can open my own welding shop in the not too distant future – even next year. The next steps are to find the appropriate land or building to rent or buy for the shop, and to source the machinery and equipment. I am also aware of the YIEDIE grant opportunity and will apply for this next year. I will continue to send money back to my family – the amount I can send is dependent on how much I can earn through my trade and so this motivates me greatly. With this achieved, I will build my own house in my community.

The future? It looks positive – by 2018 my shop will be open. I am an example of how learning a trade and acquiring skills can be a good option for securing a future, when staying on in school means little, as there are such few jobs available.

The **Youth Forward** initiative is a partnership led by the Mastercard Foundation, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Global Communities, Solidaridad, NCBA-CLUSA and GOAL. Its focus is to link young people to quality employment or to start their own businesses in the agriculture and construction sectors in Ghana and Uganda.

The **Youth Forward Learning Partnership**, led by ODI in partnership with Development Research and Training, Uganda and Participatory Development Associates, Ghana, works across the initiative to develop an evidence-informed understanding of the needs of young people in Ghana and Uganda and how the initiative can best meet those needs.

The **Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE)** is a five-year project implemented by Global Communities in partnership with Mastercard Foundation and part of the Youth Forward initiative. YIEDIE seeks to promote collaboration among different actors to create economic opportunities for disadvantaged youth. This is achieved by providing training in technical and entrepreneurial skills, empowering youth to gain dignified and fulfilling employment in Ghana's construction sector.

PhotoVoice is a UK-based organisation that specialises in participatory photography projects for social change. For more information about their work, visit www.photovoice.org

in collaboration with

with thanks to

