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**YOUTH HARNESS PROJECT**

**Project start / duration \***

Mar 2017 – Mar 2018

**Country/City \***

Ghana, Accra

**Organization**

Africa Internship Academy

**Contact Person \***

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**Background**

Facing the skill gap issue most employers face[[1]](#footnote-1), which is also one of the top most reasons for youth unemployment in Africa (about 10 million students who graduate from the 668 universities in Africa each year do not get jobs)[[2]](#footnote-2), we found the solution would be to create avenues for students and young graduates to acquire new skills and gain hands-on experience while learning where they can use the skills acquired in school. These avenues can be innovative training programs that would give these youth the opportunity to acquire soft skills seeing that these are highly valued by employers and have been shown to be correlated with improved outcomes in school, life and work.

We came up with Africa Internship Academy (AIA), which a social enterprise that offers internship services to individuals (students, young graduates) as well as stakeholders such as Government, Youth Agencies, Corporate Organizations, Multilateral Partners. AIA’s model which is a Work Integrated Learning Program (WILP) has proven to be a good approach as it gives interns the unique opportunity to learn from our experienced faculty while they gain hands-on experience in a diversity of fields but most importantly as they acquire soft skills that groom them to be change agents. The WILP is implemented through Africa Internship Academy, our flagship and youth employment program. Our internship also give students and young graduates the opportunity to do internship with start-ups and well-established businesses with the aim of reducing the hustle that comes with finding an organization to do internship with. Most importantly, doing internship with us and then with host companies accelerate their employment, because research shows that students who do internship with organizations have a greater possibility of being hired with organizations they intern with. Addressing the skill gap while creating avenues to use skills acquired greatly contribute to reducing the high rate of youth unemployment in Ghana and in Africa. In addition, our entrepreneurial modules also equip interns to work responsibly and independently in their preferred career path. In a bid to help younger students have a clear career road map, we expose secondary students to work environments. This project has equally proven to contribute greatly to what students learn in the classroom by giving them a clear and practical understanding of their desired career path.

African Union and NEPAD recently selected our AIA model as a GOOD PRACTICE TOOL TO HELP YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ON THE CONTINENT.

**Key results relating to SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH**

Our work directly contributes to achieving SDG4 and SDG8 by teaching lifelong skills that empower youth to be economically independent since they are better equipped to find good paying jobs and create sustainable ones for themselves. It closes the gaps in our educational system and therefore makes students know how to transfer the knowledge acquired in school to the workplace. Beneficiaries of the internship program have a different approach towards work and entrepreneurial opportunities and are able to influence their communities through talks and their achievements. For instance, one of our interns opened a space for social entrepreneurship events at relatively cheaper prices making it easy for his colleagues who have start-ups to have their event, thereby contributing to our wider vision. More than 80% percent of our beneficiaries report to have acquired new skills that make them stand out and have a competitive edge over their counterparts who did not take the training. More than 50% are placed in our host companies.

At the end of the Job shadow program, we developed several assessment tools to measure the impact of the program through responses to skill oriented questions and observation. Over 90% asked that we repeat the program and expand to other cities in Ghana. 85% indicated the need to include more of their colleagues and to learn and also get exposed for the purpose of making informed decisions on their career paths. The evaluation showed that students who participated in the Job shadow were 25% more prepared to make informed decisions than those who did not. Furthermore, 80 % of the students stated that with the knowledge they have acquired they are more positive with their career choices.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)