

**The Imu Ahia Project**  
**Lagos, Nigeria**  
**University of Richmond**  
**Amarachi Ugochukwu '24 (UWC Robert Bosch)**  
**May 1<sup>st</sup> – June 25<sup>th</sup> 2022**

**Problem:** Nigerian youth unemployment has increased dramatically in recent years. According to Trading Economics, youth unemployment in Nigeria is currently at 53.4%, which is among the highest in the world. Considering the relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates, which in Nigeria specifically takes the form of violent kidnappings and terrorism, it is important offer an alternative to time consuming formal education.

**Project background:** Inspired by Nigerian sociologist Peter Ekeh's argument that traditional forms of public organization are the most viable paths to development in post-colonial nations, I will base my project off the traditional apprenticeship system of *Imu Ahia* to combat unemployment. *Imu Ahia* (literally "learning the market" in Igbo) entails businessmen taking in poor youth in their community to teach them their craft. While being housed and fed by the business owner, the youth complete their training, which can take anything between 8 months to 10 years. Upon completion, former apprentices are offered a settlement by the business owner to go out and open businesses of their own, after which, according to the cultural agreement, they will later go on to continue the apprenticeship cycle. *Imu Ahia* is a large commitment and highly valued and respected in south-eastern Nigeria. Igbo communities, including local tradespeople, are at the core of my project.

*Imu Ahia* has been a crucial part of Igbo culture for centuries but became especially important to the economic viability of the Igbo people after the Biafran war in 1967, which left Igbo people with insufficient infrastructure and drastic demographic changes related to the war. Despite that, the *Imu Ahia* system has largely been credited for the entrepreneurial success amongst Igbo people today. Given that business owners can usually only take on around 5 to 7 apprentices in their lifetime, this project considers how best to innovate and increase the scale of the system, while also maintaining the traditional community aspect that has made it so successful. As an Igbo person myself, my project will involve my social network in Nigeria to preserve this community aspect of *Imu Ahia*.

**Project Objectives and Activities:** My project is founded on the premise that solutions to indigenous people's problems can be solved by using ancient knowledge and systems that worked in the past, adapting those to the present, and using technology and other modern tools to scale them.

The Business School approach, which uses a classroom setting, contrasts with application-oriented apprenticeship models like *Imu Ahia*. *Imu Ahia* apprentices gain much more than conceptual and academic knowledge of business. The system prepares them with real life scenarios. However, while a classroom can teach over 20 people at the same time, masters within *Imu Ahia* tend to only be able to take up around 5 apprentices in their lifetime. Thus, my project will focus on scaling the ancient practice and making it more efficient. The proposed project has three parts:

First, we will work with local masters of electronics trade, as well as former and current apprentices, to codify what they believe is crucial in conducting *Imu Ahia* using structured interviews. The questions and informed consent procedures for this initial research component are currently receiving IRB approval from the University of Richmond. I have discussed this research with my uncle, Oliver Nnona, who is chairman of TYP consulting, along with Dr. Michael Olabisi, a Nigerian professor of development economics at Michigan State University. Questions for masters include: What is the first thing you were taught/ you teach your apprentices, what makes a good student, what does a typical day look like (using a timeline)? Most importantly, we will emphasize identification of 'tricks of the game' that have made masters and former apprentices successful.

Second, we will collect the interview information and summarize it in a short handbook. The handbook will outline the tricks and important aspects of learning the specific trade according to the masters. The interviews will also be recorded and uploaded to YouTube. This will help spread the word surrounding *Imu Ahia*, provide firsthand information about the cultural practice and spark interest in this severely understudied traditional form of organization.

Having gathered and distilled the knowledge surrounding electronics trade, we will work closely with the masters, Dr. Olabisi, and former apprentices to develop a full curriculum for two intensive workshops, each of which will last 3 weeks. We aim to train 30 people in total in the trade. The youth participants will be recruited via family members and friends in Lagos and Enugu using printed flyers, Instagram pages, our YouTube channel, as well as word of mouth. Recruitment in Lagos will start 1 month prior to my arrival, with low barriers to entry to mimic conditions in traditional *Imu Ahia*. Workshop teachers will be the masters from the first part of the project. Upon completion of the program, students will be awarded a certificate, a stipend for participation, and will have the opportunity to network with other locals in their field at a networking event. This will allow for students to be taken up by local masters for further *Imu Ahia* training as well. They will additionally be put in contact with microfinance NGOs (specifically FINCA) during the networking event. Both will serve as an extension of the usual settlement in *Imu Ahia*. My cousin, Ikechukwu Ogbodo, is a recent engineering graduate at the University of Nigeria who is interested in electronics trade and has ties in the mostly unregulated/informal electronic trade sector (typical for a majority of businesses in Nigeria). His connections will help us in the workshop. Furthermore, TYP consulting, my uncle's consulting firm, will aid in networking and outreach for the project.

Lastly, TYP consulting will assist in setting up and managing a database with the contact information and future plans of all participants, in order to check in again with them and promote collaboration between them. This is also used to track their success in the area of electronic trade and make sure that there is a network they can fall back on which is in the spirit of traditional *Imu Ahia*. Sustained by TYP and me personally, this will in part replace the community aspect of *Imu Ahia* explained earlier. In addition, we will conduct further interviews with former apprentices after the completion of the project to document their opinions on the project as it relates to traditional *Imu Ahia*.

### **Timeline:**

Week 1: Arrival, getting to know local masters of trade, former apprentices, and current apprentices, reach out to future trainees to check in with their workshop availability.

Weeks 2+3: Conduct structured interviews with regular check ins with Dr. Olabisi, record YouTube videos and develop structure for the handbook ("*Imu Ahia: Electronic Trade*"), construct handbooks.

Week 4: Brainstorm and construct the workshop curriculum, check in with venue, talk to my cousin's friends and engineers at the University of Nigeria for further input.

Week 5+6+7: Conduct the two training programs (simultaneously) based on curriculum from week 4.

Week 8: Setting up database at TYP consulting, reflections.

**Project impact on peace and expected outcomes:** There is a strong relationship between poverty (presented here as synonymous to long term joblessness) and crime rates. Using community effort via tradition to combat youth unemployment will help bring economic stability into regions such as southern Nigeria. Moreover, employing traditional systems evokes a greater sense of responsibility towards the sustenance of such programs as opposed to structures established during colonization. This project previews the future of effective community-based economic development in former colonies.

## Projects for Peace Budget Template

Name: Amara Ugochukwu
Project Name: The Imu Ahia Project
School: University of Richmond

<b>TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:</b>
0

Total Additional Funding:		
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<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES:</b>
10000

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food and Water (\$100/biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
1620	250	55	400	0	250	250	2525	4650	
<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
1620	250	55	400	0	250	250	2525	4650	0

<b>Total Student Expenses:</b>
2325

<b>Total Project Expenses:</b>
7675



### Budget Worksheet - Student Expenses

\*please add rows as needed to accommodate your entries!\*

#### Travel

Expenses for airfare, car rentals, fuel and maintenance, public transportation and/or any other travel-related costs for the student team only. Include costs for both travel to the project focus region and within the project region.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Flight ticket	My travel from and to Nigeria from Germany. One-way flights from my home in Düsseldorf (Germany) to Lagos is around \$600 to \$700 for Lufthansa at the moment, however, prices are expected to rise significantly by time I am able to book.	\$1620

#### Lodging

Lodging costs for the student team only, such as hotels, apartments, homestays, and utility costs. This does **not** include lodging costs for guests, beneficiaries, or any other participants not on the student team. Please note that grant funds cannot be used for AirBnb lodging, per university policy.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Family stay	I plan to reimburse my family members for some of the additional costs they may incur while feeding and housing me. The cost may seem low in dollars but will go a long way in Nigerian Naira.	\$250

#### Communications

Personal communication costs for students only. For ex: cell phones and minutes, calling cards, internet service.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Nigerian Sim Card and flat rate	This will facilitate communication between team members, my family, and I. \$15 for the sim card and an additional \$40 to load on minutes.	\$55

#### Food

Food expenses for the student team only, including food purchased while traveling and while working in the project focus region. Estimate expenses on a biweekly basis (every 2 weeks).

Biweekly Estimated Food Costs	Description/Justification
\$100 every 2 weeks (400 in total)	I will mostly eat with my family but since I will likely be travelling a lot there will be some costs from eating out.

	(\$400 in total). I aim to spend no more than \$50 per week on personal food. That would be approximately \$7 per day to spend on street food since most of my day will be spent organizing.

#### Miscellaneous

Any additional personal costs that do not fall into the previous student expense categories. For example: vaccinations, visas and country entrance fees, etc. Estimate expenses on a weekly basis.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount

#### Budget Worksheet - Project Expenses

\*please add rows as needed to accommodate your entries!\*

#### Non-Student Travel and Lodging

Travel and lodging expenses for project staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and anyone else involved in the project who is **not** a member of the student team.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Bus/"Keke" fees	Use of public transportation for team members (e.g. interviewees, engineering students, during workshop etc.) to travel from and to the workshop location	\$150
Gas	My family members will get me from and to the location and I would like to help them with the costs	\$100

#### Direct Equipment and Supplies

Equipment and supplies necessary for the direct implementation of the project and fulfillment of the project's mission. For example: construction materials, books, computers, agricultural materials, start-up costs.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Rent for film camera and voice recording set	For the YouTube channel <a href="https://www.spsmediang.com/renting/">https://www.spsmediang.com/renting/</a>	\$200
Imu Ahia database	Costs related to setting up the data base, like compensation for the team at TYP helping me set up, licenses for setting up data base to ensure privacy of participants. Licenses are bought through TYP and will last for 5 years.	\$50

### Marketing and Event Support

Materials used to support the project but not for the direct fulfillment of the project's mission. For ex: marketing materials, infrastructure rental, media documentation materials, event support materials (i.e. refreshments).

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Flyers and posters	Exposure for project, will be distributed on University campuses, market places, and around schools to help recruit apprentices. Printing costs mostly.	\$150
Rent for 2 rooms	Where the 3-week apprenticeship program will be conducted in Lagos. (Nigerian property centre). <a href="https://nigeriaproertycentre.com/for-rent/event-centre-venue/conference-meeting-training-rooms/lagos/ikeja/allen/652008-30-40-seater-capacity-training-hall">https://nigeriaproertycentre.com/for-rent/event-centre-venue/conference-meeting-training-rooms/lagos/ikeja/allen/652008-30-40-seater-capacity-training-hall</a> Rent here is \$24 a day (for 21 days that is \$504). My uncle will look at the places for me prior to my arrival and make arrangements within the budget. I allocated an additional \$200 to this budget in case that place is taken and we might have to choose a more expensive place.	\$700
Chairs	For the training program (rent additional chairs)	\$75
<b>Equipment (exact equipment needs detailed in 5 boxes below)</b>	Any equipment needed after the establishment of the curriculum, including old car pieces, old fridges, and used phones to practice repair on, tools to use for repair, excursions to market places to meet more traders, tasks involving networking outside of the physical workshop space).	\$1600 (This quantity is broken down in more detail in 5 boxes below)
Old phones	Repair practice, bought locally (Surulere market)	\$100
Excursions	Explore Alaba and Surulere market to practice networking and negotiating; includes ride there, refreshments, and tools bought for practice (monitored by masters)	\$300
Old car pieces	Repair practice, bought locally (Surulere market)	\$800
Tools	Repair practice, bought locally (Surulere market)	\$200
Old fridges	Repair practice, bought locally (Surulere market)	\$200



### Staffing Costs

Any stipends or payments to guests, professional mentors, contractors, community participants.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount
Masters of trade, former and current apprentices (20 in total)	Compensation for their time doing questionnaires and interviews and working on the curriculum	\$900 total (\$45 each)
Masters of trade (5)	Those who end up teaching courses	\$600 total (\$120 each)
Stipend for participants (30)	(may be used to kickstart their business)	\$2950 total (~\$98 each)
Refreshments for participants	Nigerian small chops after events	\$200

### Miscellaneous

Any additional project expenses that do not fall into the previous categories. For example: donations for project sustainability, incorporation fees, funding for continued research.

Item	Description/Justification	Amount

### Budget Totals

**Total Estimated Student Expenses (add amounts from student expenses worksheet): \$2,325**

**Total Estimated Project Expenses (add amounts from project expenses worksheet): \$7,675**

**Total Estimated Expenses (add student + project expenses -- should come to \$10,000): 10,000**

### Other Funds

Do you anticipate receiving any additional grant or fellowship funds for this project? If so, please describe below (including awards you intend to apply to).

To expand the first part of the project surrounding research and making it more extensive, I plan on applying for the Richmond guarantee. The funds however will be kept separately. They would be used to interview more masters and work with economists to write a research paper on this severely understudied subject.