

Industry Engagement: Recycling

Focus Group Discussion held on 23/04/25

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Introduction

The Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) was established by the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund Law in 2016 to provide financial support to residents of Lagos State, and to tackle unemployment through job and wealth creation.

The LSETF Employability Unit aims at tackling the unemployment scourge among the youths by helping them gain relevant knowledge and skills through vocational training, with the goal of placing them into jobs. The relevant training courses are identified through partnerships and private sector focus groups like the one reported here. The objective is to increase the pool of skilled manpower to alleviate the acute shortages of employable labor in Lagos State, and by equipping the beneficiaries with relevant skills that cut across sectors, including but not limited to: Information Technology, Fashion, Hospitality, Construction, Beauty, and more. In the context of a new Employability Support Project funded by the German and Swiss Cooperations, LSETF prepares training in the Information Technology, Trade and Recycling.

This report summarizes the key findings from a Focus Group Discussion with Recycling industry experts within Lagos state, held in person on Wednesday April 23rd, 2025. The panel participants were chosen from LSETF network amongst:

- Former beneficiary companies from Business Support, Loan or Voucher programs,
- Employers who responded to an open Employer Engagement form published on LSETF social media and dedicated communication channel.

Discussion

Participants

Name	Role	Organization
Obuesi Phillips	CEO	SWEEP https://sweepfoundation.org.ng/
Abidoye Oluwabukola	MD	TEE BUSINESS HOME
Kadiri-Lawal Zainab	Team Lead	ZANNYTECTURE
Taiwo Adewole	Cofounder	ECO-CYCLO PLASTIC LTD
Aisha Mustapha	Founder	BIINWUNMI NIG LTD
Ifeyiwa Brendan-Ndukwu	Founder & CEO	LILIFEYS' FASHION
Ndaman Joshua	Founder & CEO	BUYSCRAP
Amadu Mohammed	Founder & CEO	PLASTIBUILD
Adebukola Adeagun	CEO	FABRITHREAD CYCLE
Anyaei Jeanla Ijeoma	CEO	JAHEY-B
Mudashiru Ridwan	Co-founder	SUSTAINABLE AFRICA SOLUTIONS
Tindeya Bulawa	Team Member	SUSTAINABLE AFRICA SOLUTIONS
Gideon Fakolade	CEO	RETREASURE RECYCLING

Discussion Summary

Topic	Feedback
<p>1. Hiring Challenges</p>	<p>The employers reported significant challenges with hiring and retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Gap: Employers like Lilifeys' Fashion highlight inadequate practical skills among trainees post-training, such as the inability to take basic measurements. • Zannytecture suggests enhancing training with hands-on, practical methods and systematic practical assessments. • Retention Issues: High turnover rates due to short-term, opportunistic employment attitudes. • Sweep emphasized insufficient technical specialization and trust issues regarding handling equipment, money, or materials. • Motivation and Expectations: • Plastibuild notes unrealistic job expectations influenced by social media narratives of quick wealth. • Eco-Cyclo mentioned particular challenges with vetted candidates lacking genuine job interest and cited unique difficulties faced by single mothers balancing full-time employment. • Sector-Specific Issues: • Buyscrap pointed out a lack of comprehensive regulation in the recycling industry. • Both Fabrithread and Plastibuild advocate improved onboarding support, including access to starter equipment and potential pooling models for tools.

<p>2. Skills in demand</p>	<p>Employers identified essential technical and soft skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Skills: Operation of recycling machinery, data entry, digital literacy, textile sorting, and upholstery. Specific roles demand precision measurement and cutting (Fashion Recycling sector). • Soft Skills: Effective business communication, customer service, flexibility, multitasking, creativity, and innovative thinking. • Marketing & Digital Skills: Highlighted particularly by Sweep and Buyscrap, emphasizing the importance of digital marketing, content creation, and social media skills.
<p>3. Trends and Economic Outlook</p>	<p>Key trends and concerns noted by employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Growth: Significant opportunities in recycling, especially plastics and textiles, with increasing product value (Eco-Cyclo, Lilifeys' Fashion) Fabrithread commented that the peak period for employment in fabric recycling is April which is widely recognized as the world earth day and when government and private companies launch recycling program that increases demand for workers like sorters, waste auditors. Lilifeys Fashion also commented that is when pilot programs and donor funded green project begins which requires hiring project staff. Binwunmi added that January and February also witness rise in employment for sorting, shredding and processing due to holiday waste packaging • Carbon Credits and Sustainability: Plastibuild pointed to the potential of carbon credits and green climate funds to enhance sector viability. However, they raised concerns about inconsistent government policies and fragmented approaches between agencies (LOMA, LASMA, other agencies do not necessarily follow existing guidelines). • Low Recycling Rates: Acknowledgment from Sweep and ReTreasure of low recycling rates (only 12% of waste recycled) and the potential to improve public perceptions and product marketing.
<p>4. Inclusivity & Diversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally inclusive participation in recycling and fashion sectors, with noted presence of women predominantly in sorting roles.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant or specific barriers reported for persons with disabilities (PWDs); however, some tasks may require adaptation depending on the disability. Tasks like fabric sorting or manual waste collection remain physically demanding, requiring visual accuracy and physical stamina.
5. Curriculum Recommendation	<p>Suggested enhancements for vocational training curricula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductory and advanced sewing skills. Comprehensive sorting methodologies by material type. Basic inventory management and data handling. Community engagement, marketing, customer service skills. Familiarity with government policies, environmental regulations, and operational use of machinery (shredders, balers).
6. Current interests	Employers express strong willingness to engage in internships, hire trained graduates, and actively participate in job fairs hosted by LSETF.
7. Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive experiences reported with workspace voucher schemes and intern programs (ReTreasure). Missed opportunities for Lagosians are identified in building renovation projects, while outsiders are successfully investing. Plastibuild encourages stronger links with climate impact research institution in Nigeria.

Conclusion & Recommendations for Project Design

Here are 3 elements to be considered and included through Recycling Curriculum Development and further Employability Support Project design update:

1. **Hands-on Practical Training:** Emphasis on practical machinery operations, sorting skills, and real-world scenario training, with attention to improving and formalizing standards in the direction of true skill-based training.
2. **Integrated Soft Skills and Digital Competencies:** Incorporation of professional or business communication, customer service, in general ensure basic digital literacy, and a level of digital marketing, and social media management.
3. **Onboarding and Retention Strategies:** Develop realistic job expectations, trust-building exercises, and long-term employee development pathways, including possible equipment pooling or financial solutions.

