



# International Projects

**Nigeria:** two BSI programmes help improve quality infrastructure and increase export potential

## PROJECT 1: QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

### The story at a glance

- Nigerian businesses often face challenges in exporting their goods and services, partly as a result of quality issues.
- The Nigerian government wanted to diversify the economy and make organisations more competitive, in order to improve the business and investment climate.
- BSI's International Projects team worked with the Nigeria National Accreditation System on a program designed to build skills to strengthen Nigeria's quality infrastructure.
- The program has helped Nigeria strengthen its quality infrastructure institutions and grow their future leaders, making the country better equipped to diversify economically and to increase cross-border trade and consumer protection.

### Starting point

Oil has been the mainstay of the Nigerian economy for over five decades. But the country recognises that it needs to diversify in order to stimulate economic growth and create sustained socio-economic development.

Nigerian firms (especially SMEs) face challenges in accessing international markets and competing with foreign firms locally. One impediment is a limited capacity to meet technical regulations and standards, including quality requirements. This means that some countries were not accepting goods from Nigeria.

Despite being the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria lacked an internationally-recognized national quality infrastructure with the capacity to improve goods and services and remove technical barriers to local, regional and international trade.

To improve this, in January 2021 the Nigerian government approved a National Quality Policy (NQP).

“This policy will create a situation whereby the government and the private sector will be able to collaborate to set up quality testing centres, testing labs which we hope will have accreditation with international centres, such that any good that has been approved to have met the standard, would be of international standard.”

**Niyi Adebayo,**

The Minister of Industry Trade and Investment

## Challenge

There was an obstacle to achieving the NQP's objectives however: the significant lack of manpower in the National Quality Infrastructure system.

Nigeria needed a workforce with new skills to manage innovations and develop technical support to agencies for standards, metrology, accreditation, and conformity assessment. These skills were not readily available from academic institutions - but they are essential to raising the country's quality standards and growing exports.

In addition, implementing the NQP would create huge job opportunities for young Nigerians, reducing unemployment and helping to grow and diversify the economy.

## Solution

To reduce the skills shortage in Nigeria's quality infrastructure system and to develop its future leaders, the Nigerian National Accreditation System (NiNAS) launched a National Quality Infrastructure Graduate Fellowship Program (NQI-GF).

The program was funded by the United Kingdom's Global Trade Programme through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The ultimate objective was two-fold: to enhance Nigeria's capacities in cross-border trade and consumer protection, and to help it take advantage of the abundant opportunities outside the oil market.

NiNAS brought in BSI's International Projects (IP) team to help deliver the NQI-GF and other technical assistance projects. To provide the best available expertise, the IP team worked with a broad range of local and international experts. They included current and former leaders from NiNAS, the Nigerian Institute of Food Science and Technology, and the UK's National Measurement Office.

### The National Quality Infrastructure Graduate Programme

In Spring 2021, Nigerian graduates attended a two-week programme with one week held on-site in Abuja, followed by a week of hybrid sessions. The program covered:

- Introduction to Nigerian Quality Infrastructure
- Standards including development process; harmonization; applications of the standards; standards and trade
- Accreditation process; standards and conformity assessment in relation to accreditation; interplay between standards; assessment, assessor trainings and peer evaluation
- Metrology, calibration, traceability of calibration certificates and the value of metrology in trading of goods and services
- Conformity assessment, globalization, technical knowledge and skills, and business system





## Result

The program has contributed to the growth and development of Nigeria's promising future leaders and will help make the country better equipped to diversify economically.

The positive feedback received from the delegates, highlighting the impact of the training, includes:

- "I want to say a huge thank-you to the trainers and organisers of this fellowship programme, because the knowledge passed on to me is something that wouldn't have been gotten from an academic environment. The planning, content of each session was so enlightening."
- "The training program has immensely contributed to my understanding of key elements of QI, its role in trade and export, and Nigeria's journey in this direction. It has also provided me with sufficient motivation to want to add value in this sector."
- "The training and programme [...] has equipped me with skills and knowledge to impact the people and the environment at large."
- "The programme has made me gain in-depth knowledge about quality infrastructure and its role in trade and export."
- "It really gave me a sound understanding about what quality infrastructure is all about, how relevant it is and how to ensure we work with standards."



## PROJECT 2: TRAINING FOR SMALL & MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

### The story at a glance

Declining global demand for oil is expected to see exports of Nigeria's main commodity fall by over US\$26 billion.

The Nigerian government is working to diversify the national economy, grow the manufacturing and services sector and revive agriculture export.

With Nigeria facing significant trade challenges, it is essential for the country's 41 million SMEs to be able to increase their exports.

BSI developed and provided a training programme for SME exporters, covering international export requirements, standards and certification measures for exports to UK and EU markets.

### Starting point

Nigeria had seen oil prices plummet since 2014. This posed major challenges to the economy, which slowed down significantly to 2.7% in 2015 then went into recession in 2016 with a growth rate of -1.5%.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also brought additional challenges in Nigeria's economy, with small businesses crashing and thousands of job losses.

The government is therefore focused on diversifying the economy and reducing dependence on crude oil. As part of this diversification effort, the manufacturing and services sector has grown significantly in recent years, helping to rebalance the economy.

In addition, the country has made progress in reviving agriculture, which provides the main source of livelihood for most Nigerians. Improving technical capacities and supporting the adoption of best practices (especially for the small-scale farmers who commonly sell 80% of total production) could stimulate income and employment opportunities. It will also minimize the environmental impact and ensure healthier diets for future generations.





## Challenge

The UK and Nigeria have strong economic ties with around £5.1 billion worth of total trade in goods and services in the year up to June 2019, an increase of 14.4% on the previous year (ONS, 2019). However, more needed to be done to open the UK and European markets to Nigerian SMEs.

Accounting for around half of GDP, Nigeria's 41 million SMEs are vital to the economy – so it was essential for them to be able to increase their exports to the UK and EU markets.

## Solution

BSI, in collaboration with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), provided a pilot programme of technical training for SME exporters, covering international export requirements, standards and certification measures for exports to UK and EU markets.

The team identified 31 SMEs (of which at least 40% were women-led), ensuring diversity in gender, geographical region, products traded, and environmental impact. The training programme covered:

- Benefits of standards for SMEs
- Standards and trade
- Standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures
- Product certification (MANCAP, CE and UKCA marking)
- Export basics: concepts of export planning, and introducing market planning tools
- Exporting to the UK and EU, focusing on regulatory frameworks, online tools and post-Brexit procedures
- Export Development Plan, covering concepts such as marketing, pricing, financing, innovation and legal

The programme was highly interactive. Participants were able to discuss their own business challenges and work in groups, sharing experiences and solve problems collaboratively.

Our international trainers were also shadowed by local trainers and NEPC trainers in order to guarantee project sustainability and a successful knowledge transfer for future.



## Result

The training programme was deemed successful and beneficial for participants, with an excellent score rating received at the end.

Attendees developed a good understanding of quality infrastructure and the practical element of the training provided opportunities for them to work together to solve problems. Using local facilitators increased engagement of the attendees, as did the one-to-one export clinic, where SME owners could discuss their own issues and find quick solutions.

Recommendations for future training was also gathered, with the training highlighting that further expert support would be needed by SMEs to increase their exporting capabilities. Over half of the companies said they needed support to develop an export business plan, while others expressed a need for help with legalities, payment methods and identifying potential markets.

The participants were highly engaged, which was helped using local facilitators and by the one-to-one export clinic where SME owners could discuss their problems and find quick solutions.





## About the partners

- The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) leads the UK's work to end extreme poverty, deliver the Global Goals, and tackle global challenges in line with the government's UK Aid Strategy.
- The Nigerian National Accreditation Service (NiNAS), involved in the quality infrastructure support project, was established in 2015 as Nigeria's National Accreditation Body. Already an associated member of the continental accreditation body AFRAC (African Accreditation Cooperation), NiNAS has made considerable strides towards providing accreditation services to conformity assessment bodies and consolidating accreditation services to aid local business and further Nigeria's NQI setup.
- The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) was a partner involved in the training for SMEs project – the Federal Government of Nigeria's apex institution for the promotion, development and diversification of exports. NEPC has over the years worked to achieve its mandate by:
  - coordinating and harmonising export development and promotion activities in the country
  - taking the lead in all national export programs
  - Interfacing with international trade agencies on cooperation and capacity building.

# Why BSI?

BSI is a global thought leader championing business excellence, innovation and best practice – whether by developing agile standards or offering quality management advisory services. BSI's International Projects team works with developing countries and transition economies to improve their quality infrastructure, trade and investment flows and market access, with the goal of boosting economic growth and prosperity.

## Our aim

BSI's International Projects (IP) department was formed with a specific mission – to help overseas governments to improve their trade policy-making processes, unlock prosperity and boost private sector competitiveness. For over 20 years, we've been providing regular 'best-in-class' expertise on trade promotion, regulatory compliance and export readiness on a range of technical assistance programmes in more than 100 countries.

Find out how International Projects can benefit your country

[www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/our-services/international-projects/](http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/our-services/international-projects/)

If you have any questions please get in touch.



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