

Unlocking the Development Potential of Skilled Returned Migrants in Nigeria's Labour Market

Nkiru Perpetua Duru | Centre for Youths Integrated Development (CYID), Nigeria | Co-author: Victor Michael Aihawu

Study object

- Examines how reintegration systems shape labour-market outcomes for Nigerian returnees.
- Focuses on institutional coordination, labour-market absorption, skills utilisation and gendered reintegration.
- Core question: under what conditions can return migration contribute to inclusive growth?

Methodology

- Qualitative research design; Nigeria, August–November 2025.
- 25 semi-structured interviews: government (8), CSOs/NGOs (6), private sector & skills institutions (4), community actors (3), returnees (4).
- Abuja, Lagos, Edo and Enugu; complemented by documentary/policy analysis.
- Thematic analysis using deductive and inductive coding.

2. What the study found — overall

2

Three interconnected findings from the Nigerian reintegration system

01 Reintegration is fragmented

- Policy and institutions are extensive, but operationally fragmented.
- Overlapping mandates, weak federal–state coordination and fragmented data disrupt continuity.
- Short programme cycles limit longer-term socio-economic follow-up.

02 Labour absorption is structural

- Returnees may bring skills, networks and entrepreneurial experience, but formal labour-market opportunities are constrained.
- Barriers reflect weak job creation and limited industrial absorption as well as certification gaps.
- Entrepreneurship often becomes a default pathway where formal employment routes are limited.

03 Gender shapes outcomes

- Women face stigma, restricted access to capital and occupational segmentation.
- Support can position women primarily as vulnerable beneficiaries rather than economic actors.
- Gender-responsive reintegration is weakened where services and mandates are fragmented.

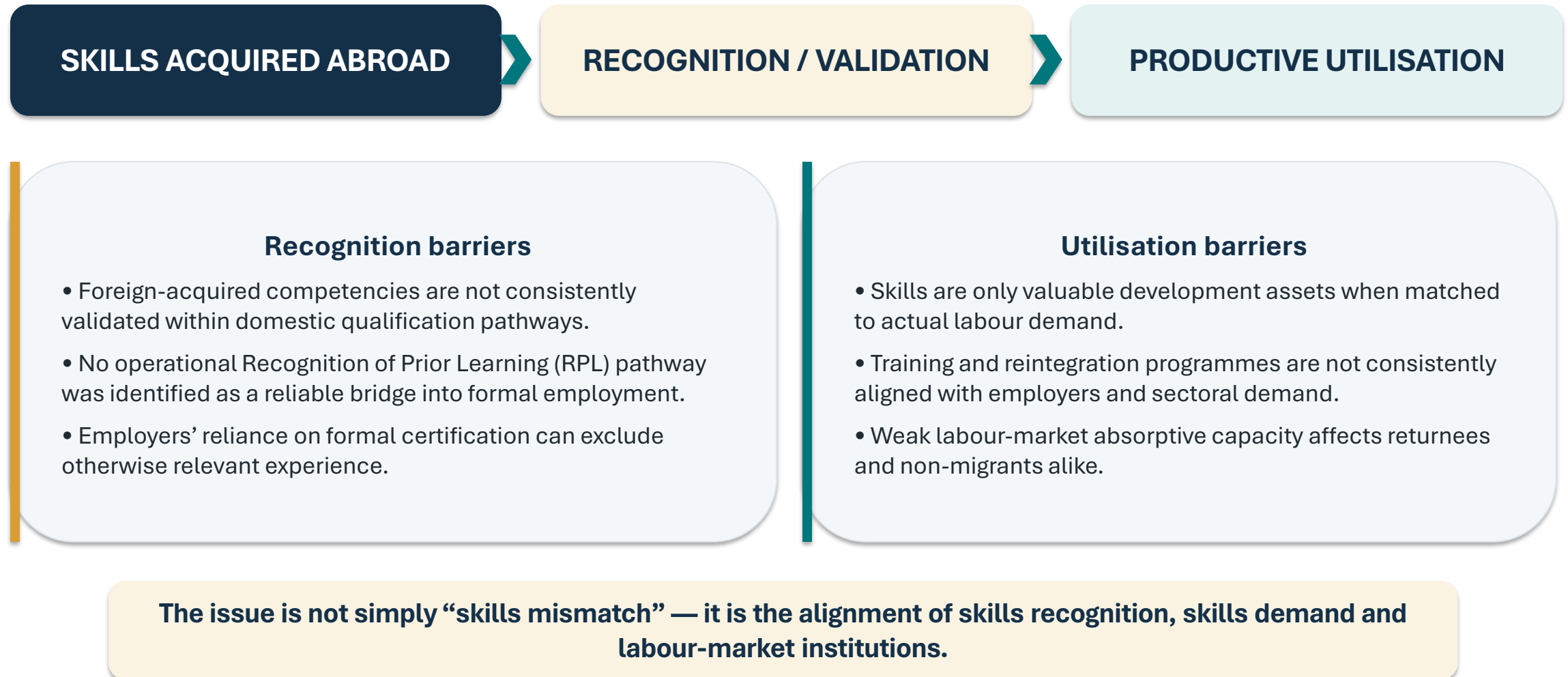
Bottom line: developmental potential is conditional — not automatic.

~1:40

3. The skills dimension — where the bottleneck sits

3

The study distinguishes between skills recognition and skills utilisation



~2:00

4. Policy implications — putting skills at the centre

4

Implications are context-sensitive and grounded in the study's qualitative evidence

1 Build recognition pathways

- Develop operational mechanisms for assessing and recognising competencies acquired abroad, including RPL.
- Link recognition to domestic qualification and employment pathways.

2 Align skills with labour demand

- Connect reintegration support and skills provision to employer needs and sectoral demand.
- Strengthen private-sector engagement in employment pathways.

3 Move from projects to systems

- Strengthen national ownership, inter-agency coordination and federal–state linkages.
- Improve data systems and longer-term follow-up beyond reception.

4 Make inclusion gender-responsive

- Treat women returnees as economic actors as well as protection beneficiaries.
- Ensure skills pathways address stigma, occupational segmentation and access to capital.

Skills policy cannot operate in isolation: recognition + demand + coordination + inclusion must connect.

~2:10

Thank you

Unlocking the Development Potential of Skilled Returned Migrants in Nigeria's Labour Market

MIGCOM Webinar • Emerging Dynamics in Labour Migration • 8 October 2026

Nkiru Perpetua Duru

Senior Program & Research Manager | Centre for Youths Integrated Development (CYID), Nigeria

nkiod@yahoo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/nkiru-duru-8592425a | nkiru.nwode@cyid.org

Questions & discussion