Two Journeys, One Vision: How Olivia and Emmanuel Are Shaping Their Futures Through Zijin's Apprenticeship Programme

On different parts of Zijin Golden Ridge Limited's (ZGRL) operations, two young professionals are rewriting what opportunity looks like for community youth. Danquah Olivia from Akyem Afosu and Emmanuel Akwa from Adausena come from different backgrounds, but they share one pathway — the Zijin Apprenticeship Programme, a three-year employability training initiative designed to equip host community youth with practical employable skills, strong work ethics and safety-first discipline.

For Olivia, the journey began after Senior High School with a desire to do more than wait for opportunity. Today, she is training as a process maintainer, confident in an environment where few women once stood.

"I graduated with an SHS certificate, but now I boldly stand ready for the job market," Olivia says. "I encourage all females in our communities to enrol whenever there is an advert. Being a woman in engineering builds you and gives you respect."

Her early days in the programme were challenging. The technical environment, safety procedures and pace of mining operations were unfamiliar. What changed everything was mentorship on the field.

"Our mentors really helped us. They taught us every detail we needed to know," she explains. "Our supervisors, managers and trainers all contributed to building us. Being on the field was my best part of the programme."

Several kilometres away, Emmanuel's story unfolds differently but with the same outcome — confidence through competence. When he joined the programme in 2023, he had an interest in technology but limited exposure to mining and electrical engineering.

"The most difficult part for me was that I didn't have prior technical knowledge about mining or electricals," Emmanuel says. "Adapting was challenging at first, but the programme helped me maximise my confidence. Now my colleagues and I are ready for the job market." Emmanuel specialises in fixed plant electricals, learning how power, instrumentation and control systems support large-scale mineral processing. The mix of classroom instruction and daily field work reshaped his understanding of engineering.

"Now when I go on the field, I understand what I am doing and why I am doing it," he adds.

Behind both stories is a structured training system deliberately built to serve community and industry needs. According to Sam Kojo Adjei Frimpong, a facilitator at ZGRL, the apprenticeship programme is designed to grow talent from the ground up.

“Zijin has a social responsibility to its host communities. We enrol youth and give them employable skills in mechanical and electrical engineering, covering both fixed plant and mobile equipment. The programme is structured over three years to build them from the basics into confident, job-ready professionals,” Sam explains.

He adds that training balances theory and practice.

He explains that the first year focuses on Introductory Skills Programme (ISP), giving participants foundational engineering knowledge, especially for those without prior technical backgrounds. In the second year, apprentices are grouped according to their strengths and interests into fixed plant or automobile streams, with further specialization in mechanical and electrical disciplines.

“In year one, the training is 70 percent classroom and 30 percent on-the-job. For year two, training is 50 percent classroom and 50 percent on-the-job. They learn component identification, dismantling, assembling and real field operations. In the third year, we move them into Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) environments where training becomes 70 percent field-based.”

To strengthen professional recognition, ZGRL collaborates with the University of Mines and Technology (UMAT), Tarkwa. During a recent visit, Professor Christian Kwaku Amuzuvi, Head of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at UMAT, praised the programme’s relevance and quality.

“The level of training these students receive is top notch. What they are going through is life-changing and puts them at par with the best engineers you can find anywhere,” he said.
He also highlighted the importance of collaboration between industry and academia.

“You are bridging the gap between academia and industry. With partnerships like this, we design programmes that solve real operational problems. The innovation your trainees demonstrate is homegrown and relevant to Ghana’s development,” Prof Amuzuvi noted.

For Olivia and Emmanuel, the apprenticeship programme is more than training. It is a doorway into professional identity, confidence and long-term opportunity.

From the process plant to fixed plant electricals, their journeys show how ZGRL’s community investment is transforming youth into contributors to Ghana’s mining and industrial future — not as spectators, but as skilled participants.

As Olivia puts it simply: “This programme builds you for life.”