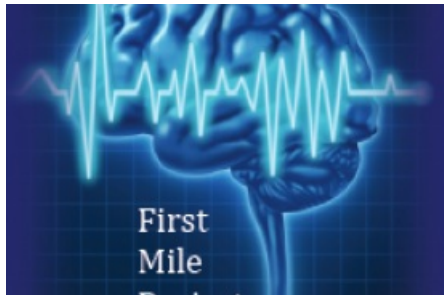


The First Mile Project

Kota Bharu, Malaysia
Zalina Ismail



Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Start-Up

Budget:

\$10,000 - \$50,000

Website:

<http://www.BRAINetwork-USM.org>

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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

BRAINetwork will create a computer-based user friendly repository and provide minimal guidance to allow children access to specific web content. They are given access to cameras and recorders to collect indigenous data on biodiversity. They will populate their digital repository and eventually share it with indigenous children around the globe.

The challenge is to provide "first mile connectivity" or the first link between the outside world and a community with NO internet access. Instead of expensive sophisticated non-sustainable satellite connections, sustainable connectivity is achieved through a participatory communication approach, via a "store-and-forward" cached internet access. Web content is delivered upon request after consultation with the indigenous community and the functionality of this system distributes control and ownership to those who use the site.

LONG TERM AIM

The BRAINetwork First Mile Project engages the entire community during the process of information gathering via a simple "low tech" connection to a "high tech" world. It will develop a new brain-based educational paradigm that encourages indigenous children to preserve indigenous knowledge from their perspective without having to sacrifice their values and without compromising their unique world view.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Malaysian indigenous children have been the target of research projects, community development schemes and programmes designed to teach, instruct or mould them into becoming "developed" and "civilised". Yet in 2011, 2,254 indigenous children did not complete their secondary education, while 1,270 attended school only until Year Six. The high number of dropouts among indigenous children is a cause for concern. Low self esteem and lack of confidence appear to be endemic among indigenous children and novel mechanisms needs to be put in place to enhance their capability, confidence, self-esteem and sense of community pride.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

This BRAINetwork First Mile Project provides a collaborative self-learning model that empowers indigenous children to explore the biodiversity of their world and share it with others. This will be achieved by the following objectives: 1. Identify the neurocognitive profiles of indigenous children in order to determine learning styles, multiple intelligences and brain lateralisation. 2. Modify an existing digital repository with a graphic user interface that is relevant and matches the neurocognitive profiles of the indigenous children. 3. Set up a "store-and-forward" cached Internet access to specific web content regarding biodiversity and conservation, via learning kiosks. 4. Provide skills for indigenous children to populate the digital repository regarding indigenous biodiversity. 5. Provide access for the sharing of the digital indigenous biodiversity repository with other indigenous children in Australia. The BRAINetwork First Mile Project engages the entire community during the process of information gathering via a simple "low tech" connection to a "high tech" world. It will develop a new brain-based educational paradigm that encourages

indigenous children to preserve indigenous knowledge from their perspective without having to sacrifice their values and without having to compromise their unique world view.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

THE CONCEPT OF SELF-LEARNING. The BRAINetwork model and concept of self-learning has been inspired by Professor Mitra's Hole-In-The-Wall project which allowed Indian slum children free access to a computer. With no prior experience, the children learnt to use the computer on their own. Professor Mitra proposed that "the acquisition of basic computing skills by any set of children can be achieved through incidental learning provided the learners are given access to a suitable computing facility, with entertaining and motivating content and some minimal (human) guidance" (A lesson in computer literacy from India's poorest kids: www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/mar2000/nf00302b.htm) BRAINetwork will create a computer-based user friendly repository and provide some minimal guidance to allow children access to specific web content. They will also be given free access to cheap cameras and voice recorders to collect indigenous data on any aspect of their daily lives. They will learn how to upload and populate their digital repository and eventually to share this repository with indigenous children in Australia and Canada. THE "FIRST MILE" CONCEPT The telecommunications industry has always referred to rural communities as being at the "last mile of connectivity." The concept of the "last mile" carries a lot of negative connotations regarding lack of connectivity. However, Moetsabi, reversed the concept and described rural communities as being the "first mile of connectivity" or the first link between the community and the outside world. However, if the Orang Asli community is the "first mile," then the real challenge for BRAINetwork is to provide cheap access to the connected world in a community where there is NO access to Internet services. Instead of pushing for connectivity via expensive sophisticated non sustainable methods such as satellite connections and broadband over powerline, the BRAINetwork First Mile Project aims to achieve sustainable connectivity through a participatory communication approach, with the provision of a stored-and-forward cached Internet access to indigenous children in remote rural villages. We already have a committee of indigenous elders, youth and children who work together with us to develop an Indigenous Archery Team, Kindergarten and First Aid Centre based on their needs and their suggestions. We are working with sociologists and socioeconomists to transate the dream of an empowered indigenous community that is self-sustaining.

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Currently there are no competitors in this area as most community work tend to be "one-off", non sustainable short term projects.

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