ICTS TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL GAP IN POST-CONFLICT SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone
Mohamed Sidique Dabo

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

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

Youth bridging the digital divide in post-conflict communities.

File attachments:
presentation- can.ppt

About You

Location

Project Street Address
Project City
Project Province/State
Project Postal/Zip Code
Project Country

Your idea

Field of Work
education

If Field of Work is “other” please define in 1-2 words below

Year project started (or projected start date) (yyyy)
2008

YouTube Upload

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYNMbPiO_r8

<object width="425" height="344"><param name="movie" value="http://www.youtube.com/v/RYNMbPiO_r8&hl=en&fs=1"></param><param name="allowFullScreen" value="true"></param><embed src="http://www.youtube.com/v/RYNMbPiO_r8&hl=en&fs=1" type="application/x-shockwave-flash" allowfullscreen="true" width="425" height="344"></embed></object>

Project URL (or link to any media coverage)

http://www.peacechild.org/btc/list

What is the primary problem your venture is trying to address and how are you addressing it (or planning to address it)?

The Pilot Project will reflect on the use of Information technology skills and discuss human rights/ gender issues to
• Harness the need for a non-violence community and discrimination against women and children. As, this heavily mined community concentrates basically on their 'dreams' neglecting basic human issues.
• Target the community leaders, parents and the youths to see the need for education of the girl child instead of early marriages of their girl – child. As, they also can become productive citizens...
• To bridge the gap of Information Technology as the youths can be actively engaged in finding jobs/empowerment as the pre-requisite for many jobs today.
• To divert the youths attention from the mines, as child miners to a more responsible and productive means of acquiring skills to discuss these gender/human rights issues as a STAND UP initiative.
• The project will enable them to share skills, changing lives as a means to showcase their hidden talents in a post – conflict community.

Innovation

Project Description

Youth bridging the digital divide in post-conflict communities.

Unique and different

It is a pilot project that is geared towards the youths in Koidu Town – Kono District, Eastern part of Sierra Leone.

Computer skills and the vast resources available on the internet have tremendously helped in not only reforming humanity and societies, but also in transforming the world into a global village. Given little infrastructure for schools and counseling centers, iEARN SL has found computers and other telecommunications technologies to be very useful in providing the youths in Koidu Town with an effective means of therapy, rehabilitation and
The Pilot Project offers youth in Koidu Town – Sierra Leone a chance to build ICT skills with the intent to reclaim their lives and discuss Human Rights and Gender issues and try to develop these issues through Information Technology as productive citizens. To accomplish this, the project directly targets and rehabilitates Sierra Leonean youth through Human Rights education in schools and to enhance the need for youths who have been child miners to be trained as hard working citizens to fill their economic niches.

Project plan

During the next 6 months, the following factors have been identified as significant keys to success:
1. Secure the Funding.
2. Growth the Revenue creation aspects of the organization.
3. Continue to Gain recognition on the international stage.
4. Broaden Scope of Representation.
5. Secure Additional Centers Accounts.
6. Strengthening the Management Team.

And to provide leadership training for the youth as a medium to see themselves as role models to 'capture' back the minds of their leaders and see them as productive citizens.

Partnerships

iEARN Sierra Leone has had the opportunity to work with and develop some very strong and promising strategic partnerships with some of the world's most influential as….

? IEARN is a local and internationally registered member of iEARN International
? Ministry of Youth and Sports
? Sierra Leone Association of Non Governmental organizations (SLANGO)
? Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

MY HERO

MY HERO is a partner of iEARN Sierra Leone helping to spread the message of Childsoldier.org Project and supporting the growth and development of the iEARN Youth Center in Sierra Leone. Thanks to MY HERO, the center will have temporary internet connection to facilitate a collaborative project for iEARN SL youths.

Members of iEARN Sierra Leone have been featured on The MY HERO Project web site. MY HERO is proud to share the stories and art work of the members of iEARN Sierra Leone with teachers and children in schools around the world. Andrew Greene, Jr. is featured as a Teacher and Peacemaker Hero.

The ART WORK of Tormusa Koroma of Sierra Leone is featured on MY HERO.
The ART WORK of Sheku A. Turay of Sierra Leone is featured on MY HERO.

Computer Aid International

Computer Aid International, a charitable organization who gave 5 donated recycled computers for a local community access centre.
Our major challenge now is to get these computers connected to the internet on a regular basis and have our youths participate in the sharing of ideas with peers around the world. This will help us create a youth community access centre which would serve as the principal information window to the world for our community's war-affected youths and underprivileged children. It would help them participate in online educational activities, interact with other children around the world, and acquire the vast array of ICT skills that to date have been lacking in developing countries like Sierra Leone.

PeaceChild International – UK, a charitable organization who sponsored BE THE CHANGE ACTION Project as a youth led-development project early this year.
iEARN Sierra Leone has had the opportunity to work with and develop some very strong and promising strategic partnerships with some of the world’s most influential as….

Impact

To create empowerment/employment for youth in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

Effectiveness

Over 100 people, especially the young people, ex-child combatants, school drop - outs, children of war's effects and high school kids in using basic computer skills to fulfill their economic/leadership niches.

How do you engage and impact the community?

1.80% of iEARN graduates going to formal employment.
2.65% of iEARN graduates engaged in self – employment
3.70% of trainees pursuing higher education
4.85% of iEARN graduates creating new Youth activism and training centres.
5.50% of iEARN graduates becoming trainers at iEARN and their communities/schools

By ‘sharing skills changing lives' phenomenon. As, a means of bridging the digital gap among students and help create an innovative platform for ex-child soldiers and child miners/labour and even girls/women to take up STAND UP initiatives about issues in a male dominance society to become productive citizens.

How do you measure this impact?

1. Drastic reduction of children / youth in the mines, forsaken a life of toil to education, growth reform in technology.
2. 99 youths being trained in ICT
3. Leadership skills, self esteem built.
4. Twelve Chiefdom/communities aware about the predicaments and seek solutions.
5. Awareness raising through media.
6. Youths get involve and take STAND UP initiatives against Human Rights issues.
7. 75 percent will take up decisions and become leaders to sensitize their communities/schools.
8. 65 percent gaining leadership.

Obstacles
The non-compliance of the community leaders in actually providing a space as a centre for training youth as a means to educate and sensitize them about the use of ICT and to make them young leaders in their respective communities.
The non-positive ways of youth in smearing a negative campaign in their neighbourhoods, hence creating the youthful ideals as not important in nation development.

Sustainability
Financing source
(or how do you expect your initiative will be financed)
Through personal donations, awards, projects, community donations or youth registration fees etc.
With financial support to iEARN SL, means direct benefit to Sierra Leone’s youth with little to no overhead. Our staff is largely volunteer, being paid only with stipends when partnering with other organizations on special projects. Here is an idea of what your donation/financial support can provide:
$1 provides transportation for 2 children to come to the iEARN - Kono center to learn
$20 fuels the generator that helps to power up the computers and keep them running
$30 pays for a month of internet subscription
$100 helps to install telephone lines for access to the internet
$500 pays for a printer, scanner, and computer tables with chairs
$1000 pays for one year of technical support and maintenance for computers and related technology
$2500 sets up one center with 10 workstations to serve 40 – 50 war-affected youths

Aside from financial sustainability, how do you plan to grow and sustain your project?
The Pilot Project will survive and continue to yield its positive change in the lives of the youths in Kono through professional training contract. That is, community leaders and even government officials will be trained and acquire ICT skills to manage their jobs.
There will be a minimal fee for users (who are not youths at the center) especially adults and would like to do their jobs with this latest technology. That is very fast and can create a difference in the presentation of their work for future reference.
Obviously, there would be volunteers who have already been trained as beneficiaries of the program to help others and find empowerment/employment at the center. As, these youths (volunteers) will replicate these skills to the community people, thereby getting themselves employed; whom at the end will fill their economic niches from stipends as a means of incentives.

Finance details
iEARN Sierra Leone was founded in 1999 in Freetown, Sierra Leone, by Andrew Benson Greene, Jr. It is a registered Non-Governmental Organization in the tax-exempt not-for-profit sector. To date, iEARN Sierra Leone is working on a 'shoe string' budget with very little capital, drastically limiting its reach and effectiveness. Much of the staff required has had to be on a volunteer-basis.
iEARN was established in Sierra Leone in an attempt to address the pressing need for psychosocial healing and rehabilitation of former child soldiers and other war-affected youth in the country. Recognizing the immense impact that empowering youth with computer and ICT, (Information and Communications Technology), skills training had on healing and rehabilitation.
Currently, Sierra Leone’s schools lack the resources and infrastructure to provide computers and internet access, or to train students in Information and Communications Technology. Therefore, outside facilities and training centers are needed to help youth develop IT and internet skills.

PeaceChild International – UK funded the project early this year with $1000 through the BE THE CHANGE ACTION PROJECT for Young leaders as a youth led-development project. Other in-kind donation were made as:
• Recycled Computers – 5 (Five) from UK - Computer Aid International as donations, supported by Gibbs Trust – England for shipment to Sierra Leone.
• Used Generator – iEARN Sierra Leone Centre – Freetown Branch
• Recycled Computers – 15 (Fifteen) from World Computer Exchange
Brima Lakoh – ICT Volunteer
Paul Komba Pessima – Asst. Youth Leader
Agatha Levi – Youth Representative (Gender Activist)
Zainab Kargbo – Youth Representative (Outreach – Girls Club)
Ibrahim Dumbuya – Youth Representative (Outreach)

Creative funding
Through project proposals, competition, awards or donations from the community. And also implementing projects with partners in respect of global issues that are key components of the Organization’s activities

Other non finance needs
Through Internship/Apprenticeships opportunities as students who have acquired certificates of merit and successful completion of software and hardware application program, they are recommended to offices where they assist in training the staff. Youth who have proven capable in working with hardware issues, gain apprenticeships with IT staff and other proficient graduates go on to teach other youth within the iEARN centre. This helps to build their self-esteem and confidence, bring their youth service and enterprise back to the program that has capacitated them.
Through iEARN SL’s music program, subjects such as forgiveness, reconciliation, tolerance, and
understanding, have the power to create a new glimmer of hope for a recovering country under the constant threat of a revival in violence. In some circumstances the young rap artist will transform their own first hand experience into powerful music documentary with stories of peace, love, and tolerance.

Exchange and expansion programs as they can visit other schools and centres within and outside the country, with the need to expand their initiatives in creating school clubs.

THE CHILD MINERS PROJECT – ICTs TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL GAP IN POST – CONFLICT SIERRA LEONE. The Project initiative came from Mohamed S. Dabo who comes from Sierra Leone. Mohamed became aware of the fate of children in Koidu Town following the conflict in his country which lasted over 10 years. He believes that appeasement by means of Information Technology can achieve something and improve the quality of life of those involved, who are now child miners in a bid to survive. They can exchange ideas about peace and Human Rights/gender issues and the ills of child miners with people of the same age from all over the world and become ambassadors by means of telecommunication. This does not just promote learning, but also social justice and creates a positive change as former child miners in post – conflict communities can also play significant roles in creating a change or perspective in the minds of their community leaders as the future leaders in their own communities and towns.

The Project is geared towards using ICTs to assist in skills training and rehabilitation of youths through discussion forums and workshops wherein youths who have suffered from war and war’s affects such as child miners. As, the wanton of getting wealth variably involves parents, community leaders in getting these youths involved in the mines and sometimes losing their children or the child in search of diamonds.

To accomplish this, the project directly targets youths in Koidu Town through education and ICT exchanges, promote ICT for peace and Human Rights education that encompasses gender issues in schools, through outreach programs, forums and workshops.

Awards

EDUCATION
Fourah Bay College/USL, Freetown, Sierra Leone
B.A Hons. Candidate Political Science, International Relations C/O 2009/10
Conciliation Resources, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Certificate in Security Sector Analysis - 2008
Global Youth Partnership for Africa
Certificate in The Role of Youth in Post-Conflict Communities - 2008.
Fourah Bay College/USL, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Diploma in African/Cultural Studies - 2003/05
Bo Computer Institute, Bo Town, Sierra Leone
Certificate in Computer Software - 2002

WORK HISTORY
1. Regional Youth Coordinator/ICT Volunteer - 2007 - present
iEARN Sierra Leone, non-profit organization.
2. Trainer/Instructor - Annual iEARN Summer School for high school and community youth - 2003/07
3. Member of the iEARN-SL coordinating team (staff)
4. Represented iEARN Sierra Leone in many national workshops and conferences in the country and within the sub-region.
5. Helped to coordinate iEARN students to participate fully at the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) organized by the Ministry of Development.

Broader context

It revolves around the need of youth in empowering themselves for self-reliance. As, the needs of youth are numerous with diverse reasons to fulfill their economic niches. For example, the computer literacy and ICT situation is precarious in Sierra Leone. According to the UNDP Global Development Index, Sierra Leone remains the least developed country in the World and needs to catch up. The youth, who’ve been victim of war and who represent the future, continue to face the digital divide which broadens every hour. Advances in technology and new forms of computer and ICT training available today, provide an excellent opportunity for narrowing that divide and allowing these kids the chance to compete in job markets, grow as people and change their lives. Hence, “. . . a world where the chasm between rich and poor grows wider will be neither stable nor secure.” - Jimmy Carter(1)

The “digital divide” is very pronounced in Africa, where it is estimated that there is one computer per every 1000 people (2). By bringing skills to the youth of Sierra Leone, we empower them to shape the future. By connecting with other youths throughout the world, young people gain hope and courage to meet the challenges of everyday life.
Repeated studies as well as common knowledge show that countries with strong communications infrastructure have a better opportunity to create and build investment, grow their economies, and maintain political stability. Helping Sierra Leone at this critical time is a worthy investment that will build upon itself.

Ongoing

That some day, some how there will be no or less divide in terms of information technology among youth irrespective of their backgrounds as a result of the digital divide that has been bridge in ‘connecting youth making a difference’ platform.

And this will bring an innovative form in terms of communications among individuals as a tool to enhance the need for positive change among youth as agents of social change in their communities

What is your age?
24

How did you hear about this competition?
Through a Youth website – iEARN Newsflash

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/competition/staplesyv/entries/icts-close-digital-gap-post-conflict-sierra-leone#comment-0