

Claremont McKenna College  
Nora Studholme  
*Code for Humanity*  
June 15<sup>th</sup>-August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
Madagascar

Although Nosy Be is one of the wealthiest regions of Madagascar, it remains one of the poorest in the world, and foreign businesses and investors capture the majority of the wealth. In the town of Ambatoloaka there are dozens of resorts, hotels, restaurants and clubs owned and used almost exclusively by Europeans: on the beach of Ambatoloaka, only three of the dozens of hotels I researched during my study abroad period there were owned by local people. In addition, there are around 8,000 long-term foreign nationals living on Nosy Be, most of whom are engaged in the hotel and restaurant businesses. While there are locally-owned hotels and tourist attractions, many of these suffer from a lack of international publicity and are overshadowed by their foreign-owned competitors.

The influx of European tourists to the island has also led to a dramatic increase in prostitution among young local women, and recent studies by the IRIN and others estimate roughly 80% of young women and girls ages 12-30 engage in prostitution to some degree. These women have few viable economic alternatives in a country in which over 77% of the population lives under the poverty line, and they have lost much of their autonomy in choosing a livelihood.

Tension between tourists and local people on Nosy Be has been escalating as the native population becomes increasingly frustrated with both the pervasiveness of prostitution and the prevalence of foreign-owned hotels and resorts. In October of 2013, the situation culminated in a tragic and fatal conflict between the traditionally peaceful local people and the tourists allegedly engaged in child trafficking. This tension is particularly complicated because tourism is Madagascar's main hope for economic expansion: while other sectors of the economy continue to diminish, tourism is growing at an average rate of 11% each year. Although expansion of tourism will surely bring wealth into the region, it will be increasingly important to mitigate the tensions that result from such growth and measures must be taken to make sure that everyone, not just foreign investors, see the benefits of this growth.

### **Project Proposal**

With the goal of breaking down barriers at the root of these conditions and conflicts, I plan to start Code for Humanity, a school for young women in Nosy Be, Madagascar that teaches basic computer literacy and web design skills. With this knowledge, women will have marketable skills that will provide them the opportunity to earn a livelihood. In addition, they will be able to work for local tourist attractions in order to increase international publicity and thus enhance local business. Empowering the women on Nosy Be through business-computer skills will positively affect not only the individual students, but also the community as a whole.

The first class of Code for Humanity will run through the summer of 2014, and will be held in Nosy Be in a building owned by GirlHouse, a Swedish-run non-profit that aims to provide shelter and support for young women who are at risk for prostitution. During my studies in Nosy Be, I worked with the founder of the organization and he has agreed to allow me to host classes in this space. The major towns on the island are well connected by wireless internet, increasing the viability and potential impact of teaching computer skills among local women.

The pilot class will be comprised of twelve women between the ages of 12 and 30. The majority of the class will include young women from GirlHouse, and others will be recruited based on the advice of another local contact, Gerard, who helps run a community organization for young women who hope to gain skills to join the tourism industry. In addition, a Peace Corps school on Nosy Be has expressed interest in collaboration, and two of the local schoolteachers will also be taking the class so that they can later pass on the skills to their students.

Students will be assigned to groups, and each group will have a particular local business as their initial project. Each group will be responsible for taking photos and gathering information about the business, as well as for creating the website. I have been in contact with three locally-owned hotels in need of websites who are supportive of the project and are eager to participate as pilot businesses: in particular, I have focused on partnering with sustainable, eco-friendly resorts and tourist industries.

I plan to teach classes four days a week for 8 weeks, with the following curriculum:

Week 1	Basic Computer Skills: Intro to laptops, Microsoft Word, navigating the keyboard, navigating the icons, working online.
Week 2	User Interface: What is a website? What aspects should it have? How do people use different websites?
Week 3	Basic HTML and CSS: Introduction to new “language” of coding, build very basic web page.
Week 4	Working with Wordpress: Learning to use web platform (Wordpress) to create a more complex website; apply lessons of Week 2 and 3. (Textbook: <i>Manual Wordpress 3.5, French ed.</i> )
Week 5	Project Assignment: Assign students to groups of 3, each with a particular local business as their initial project; take photos and gather information about the business
Week 6	Compiling the Sites: Using information and media from Week 5, create web site for local businesses.
Week 7	Continue working on web projects, gather any additional information needed, edits.
Week 8	Creation of “how-to” manual for next generation of students; “graduation” party!

At the completion of the pilot class, I plan to leave the computers in the building for future classes of Code for Humanity and to serve as a working computer “lab” for young women on the island. During the final week of the project students will collaborate to write a “how-to” manual for the next generation of students. The American Peace Corps volunteer on the island has agreed to help ensure the continuation of the project after my grant period has ended, not only supporting future classes but also keeping and caring for the computers that are left.

### Network

Many individuals and organizations with whom I worked during my time in Nosy Be have been enthusiastic about this project, and many parties have generously offered their support. Gerard and Francine, local hotel owners with whom I lived during my study abroad period, have offered subsidized housing for the duration of my stay; GirlHouse and the Peace Corps have both offered a location for classes, assistance recruiting the first class of students, and help ensuring the continuation and sustainability of the project long-term. Finally, the director of my Study Abroad program in Madagascar has been instrumental in facilitating connections with locally-owned hotels, three of whom have agreed to participate as pilot projects.

In addition to this support network, my proficiency in French and basic Malagasy will allow me to communicate effectively with students. My own web development skills are nearly all self-taught, and the experience has prepared me to be able to anticipate and address many of the challenges that come with learning a new skill, one which can seem intimidating and inaccessible at first but which, with support, quickly becomes intuitive, valuable and hopefully enjoyable. Finally, my eight years of experience tutoring students in subjects from writing to mathematics speaks to both my ability to teach and my commitment to the education process. Teaching offers me intrinsic rewards that I experience as uniquely fulfilling, and I am always inspired by how much I learn from my students in return.