

Matumaini ya Badaaye (Kiswahili for *"Hope for the Future"*)

Tanzania, Africa

Notre Dame of Maryland University

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Section 1: Project Goals and Implementation:

Our goal was to teach computer skills to the students at Faraja Primary School for Disabled Children in Tanzania, Africa. We brought four refurbished laptop computers and ordered 5 refurbished desktop computers from Affordable Computer Technology for Tanzania (ACTT) to be equipped with computer software, such as Microsoft Office, to teach the children basic computer skills.

The greatest difficulty we faced was replacing one of the original project participants due to familial restraints. After airline reservations and visas had been secured, we learned that Rebecca Joop could no longer participate in the project and Charisma Edmonds-Massey took her place. Since the airline tickets had already been purchased, we had to cancel her flight and consequently lost nearly a thousand dollars. Since this happened very close to our departure date, we had to pay more than expected for the new ticket as well as have some funds reimbursed by Rebecca Joop. Notre Dame donated the funds to offset the project funds lost due to this change and a previous faculty member donated a laptop computer to the project. Faraja Primary School was kind enough to provide a private room for us in the girl's dormitory as well as three meals a day at no charge.

In our proposal we had hoped to connect the students in Tanzania to a school in the United States, however, we were unable to make a connection with any local schools. We contacted several public and private elementary schools, and though many teachers seemed eager to create a cross-cultural friendship between the schools, we were unable to secure a class, and instead devoted our time to educating the students and teachers about technology.

Though many Tanzanians speak English, the primary language is Kiswahili. Although we had both purchased language books, we learned the majority of the phrases we used by asking students and teachers. Teaching was stressful but became easier after learning, "yes," "no," and "have a seat," in Kiswahili. We met with all four class levels, about 90 students, three times a week: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Each class would meet for forty minutes and come at different times every day. After twenty minutes we rotated the children so that every child had an opportunity to use the desktop computers from ACTT, which had programs such as Mavis Beacon, to help with typing skills, and other educational software. This did not always work as planned, especially with the smaller levels, because the language barrier made it hard to communicate. The older children understood more English so they cooperated more easily. But no matter the age, they all wanted to play games instead of type.

We focused on teaching the older students important typing skills that would help them to improve their speed and accuracy. Many of their physical disabilities made this slightly difficult for them, because several students do not have all their digits, both hands, or function and mobility of their hands. During the first few weeks we did not have internet connection and worked with ACTT to connect all of them with Ethernet cables. Every afternoon during the week, we met with five teachers for at least an hour and taught them how to start and shut down the computers, type with both hands, and how to use Microsoft Word.

The title of our project is "Hope for the Future," so we would love to see our project continue long after we are gone. However, there is currently no teacher or volunteer to teach technology. When we arrived, we were shown the old computers that had not been used since May 2014 and we could see how they have become outdated, broken, and semi-functional. Since all of the computers are now situated in a U-shape in the library, Faraja has plans to partition the room in order to secure the computers and separate it from the rest of the library. We stressed to the director how important it is to secure the computers because we had been told that many of the previous laptops had wandered off or

become broken by the students manhandling them. Each computer has been installed with two user accounts, an administrator account accessible only with a password for teachers to use, and a guest account for students. The idea is that by limiting their accessibility, we can also limit the amount of changes they can make and ultimately damage they can do to the computers. Connecting Faraja with ACTT was also strategic because we provided the school with a local company to contact with any technology concerns or problems. We could not provide them with training, but ACTT has created a connection with Faraja that could potentially lead to instructor training. In order for our project to be sustained into the future, the next steps for Faraja need to be building a secure partition in the library, and finding a volunteer or hire a technology teacher to instruct the students.

Section 2: Contribution to Peace:

Peace correlates with being content. Peace is experiencing growth that only you are able to achieve. Peace is contagious. When a person is at peace, they are inspired to help others achieve peace. Our goal with the project contributed to peace in various ways. We made a greater effort to have an impact on the older children who will have to depart Faraja after finishing primary school. These children have futures in either a private secondary school or acquiring a trade that will support them for the rest of their lives. The main focus of our project was to improve their basic knowledge of computers. They knew how to start the computers and click the internet browser, but we introduced them to new software, such as Microsoft Office and Mavis Beacon. They now have the resources to learn and improve their typing, as well as reading and writing English, thanks to other educational games and online libraries downloaded onto the computers. Living in a community where any type of disability can mark a person as unworthy or less intelligent, the children are reliant on their families to invest time and money into them in order to succeed. By teaching these advanced skills, to a community of students that have the support of their families, we hope this will allow the students to become more marketable, allowing them to possess more efficient and successful jobs in the future. Additionally, this will allow them to become active and contributing members of society. With their successful integration, we hope that they can positively change the societal view of people with disabilities, so that instead of casting them off, other families with children with physical disabilities, and the Tanzanian society will choose to invest time and money into them. From this project we have seen that physical disabilities do not completely hinder the ability for a child to function and learn new skills. This project proved to us if a child has the determination, they can surpass all obstacles, and is essentially limitless.

We arrived at Faraja with the idea that we would help the students learn something new. Instead, we have left knowing we learned from the students, faculty, staff, and local community, more than we ever could have provided to them. The Faraja community did not need help. They simply needed someone to uncover and expose the skills that the children already had within them. Those that were helped were us. Everything from the language to multiple cultures within Tanzania has impacted our mindsets. If we could do it all over again we would explain that this project is not solely bringing peace to the receiving community, but to those proposing the project as well. By immersing ourselves in an unfamiliar culture and community, we were reaffirmed that everyone is the same. We all possess the skills and determination necessary to succeed and live happily, within us. We have achieved peace, by experiencing other communities and embracing them wholeheartedly.

“This project gives the opportunity for everyone involved to have hope for the future. It is our dream to influence these students in such a way that they grow up to be doctors, lawyers or teachers who help generation after generation. Given the proper resources, we were able to teach students how to construct emails, PowerPoint presentations and Word documents; while expecting nothing in return but

that was impossible. We gained so much more.”- Charisma Edmonds- Massey

