



Catch IT Young Project Summary and Update

Project name CatchITYoung

Location: Ghana

Pillar: Education

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Comments: This paper is designed to update OVF donors and supporters as to the status of this program.

Summary:

CatchITYoung focuses on pre-tertiary education, providing ICT literacy and proficiency skills and utilizing the technology effectively in the student and teacher instructional process. Each school, which is a project site, has 30 pupils forming the CatchITYoung Club. During the selection process, we try to attain a 1:1 or 2:3 female-male ratio. Each school also has two teachers as guides/patrons for the students. For the achievement of the project objectives, an integrated Technology Management (ITM) mechanism was developed. This enables the patrons and project coordinators to track the attendance to training sessions of students and teachers respectively. A Short Message System (SMS) informs teachers of developments and summons them to a meeting when necessary.

Over 300 students have just completed training on various ICT skills at the SRC-ICT Center of the University of Education in Winneba-Ghana (UEW). To sustain the vision, course materials for the pupils are being produced in line with the Ghana Education Service set standards for IT Literacy in schools. Experienced educationists at UEW are currently writing this. A residential holiday camp dubbed CatchITYoung Holiday Camp dubbed **New Academic Year IT School** is currently being put together for the third quarter of 2006. Participants will study how to use Computer Aided Instructional Materials, develop websites, host them on free sites, and develop simple databases.

Vision - objectives – goals:

The project's short and medium term objectives seek the effective deployment of



ICT tools and knowledge into pre-tertiary education at the grass root level; the development and growth of an Information Society for all at the grassroots with the youth between 12 –22 years as the core.

It seeks to improve pre-tertiary students/teachers knowledge in the use of IT for research and knowledge building. Basic computer literacy, proficiency in office user applications, web design, database management, etc. form the core skills to be learnt for application in the process of instruction and study.

Another objective ensures the provision of access to the Internet. This provides valuable information and data as a catalyst to expanding knowledge.

Annually, the project trains not less than three hundred (300) pre-tertiary pupils and fifteen (15) teachers. This is an annual target. By 2010, four years from now, we hope to have trained at least two thousand (2000) students and hundred (100) teachers.

The next nine months (Jan. - Sept. 06) will see vigorous fund raising effort to build a permanent telecentre/digital village for the project in Winneba. This should be operational by December 2006.

Applications:

Four areas of the Integrated Technology Management (ITM) mechanism developed for the project accounts for the innovate use of ICT:

1. First is the use of a short Message System (SMS), which informs teachers of developments and summons them to a meeting when necessary. A group list is formed on the project coordinator and teachers' phones and used for information dissemination. The assured delivery of SMS avoids loss and misrepresentation of information and ensures promptness to action.
2. Secondly, Computer Based Tutors (CBT) / Computer Aided Instruction (CAI) materials are used to supplement the knowledge building process. After computer literacy lessons for the pupils, the teachers who already are exposed to the use of some CBT/CAI in other training sections, take these students with these materials to supplement what has been learnt in the classroom.
3. Thirdly, a quiz competition for the schools participating in the training is organised live on a community radio station. This instils a competitive spirit in all clubs and catalyses study during training as the whole



- community gets to hear of the “best” and “worst” school in this case.
4. Fourthly, a small database built for the project is effectively and efficiently used by patrons and project coordinators to track the attendance to training sessions of students and teachers respectively.
 5. Finally, good Internet Search Skills are developed and sharpened for the club members as well.

Target groups:

People: Children and Youth especially of school-going age

Organizations: Ghana Education Service, Pre-tertiary Educational Institutions

Project organisation and ownership:

Provision of ICT literacy and skills can only be done within a practical setting. Thus, a club formation strategy is adopted with 30 pupils from each school. Ten (10) from each level/year; 1st, 2nd and 3rd. During training sessions, two schools totaling sixty (60) students with their patrons –two teachers- use a designated computer lab. The lab is hired for some hours of the day and thus a timetable is drawn for effective utilization.

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Stakeholders:

Users: Pre-tertiary education students in Ghana, teachers of pre-tertiary students.

Service providers: University of Education, Winneba-Ghana, African Youth Initiative partners and International Young Professionals Foundation

System manufacturers:

Corporations:

Public sector: Ministry of Education-Ghana, Ghana Education Service

Impact:



It has been said that, in this 21st century of Information revolution, a teacher who is not current is not worth his/her job. The provision of Internet access to teachers and the skills to undertake research online enables the teachers to provide very current and accurate data and examples in the instructional process. This has qualitatively improved their instructional delivery.

The use of CBT/CAIs has helped in the simulation of extremely difficult to explain scenarios to pre-tertiary pupils. Some topics in the local textbooks have been very difficult to teach and some teachers have always avoided these topics. However, with pictures and simulations from the web, these topics have been explained to the understanding of the pupils.

We have seen a growing attendance of members of the CatchITYoung clubs to cafes rather than other social gatherings. Many more students are now using the web for assignments and communication with friends. Gradually a cream of youth abreast with Information Technology development trends and applications are being built in Ghanaian schools.

The teachers are developing and documenting CBT materials for teaching those quiet difficult to handle topics in the syllabus.

The project is evaluated using exercises and projects given to club members; school quiz competitions and questionnaires filled by patrons and club members. These have shown favorable response.

Replication:

The chances of using concepts and lessons learned from the project are extremely high if not totally transferable. The formation of a club and the procedures to attain gender parity within these processes are tested, proven and clearly spelt out.

In an environment where there are schools and a computer lab with internet access -either by use of a telephone line or otherwise- the strategy is applicable. In the absence of the internet, the CBTs are alone could be a novelty. For the effective usage of the SMS for group text messaging, there needs to be coverage for an existing mobile communication network within the locality. Of course, this project is more helpful in a community with low ICT literacy.



Outlook:

It is envisioned that the project's continuity will be ensured by the implementation of the following concrete programmes and or strategies:

1. Establishment of a computer lab for the Winneba community with facilities to house permanent secretariat to manage the anticipated expansion throughout the nation. This is to be operational by December 2006.
2. Yearly summits (New Academic Year IT School) will be held to physically bring together various CatchITYoung clubs to showcase projects and discuss new trends. The third quarter of 2006 is the scheduled time for this year's event and maiden one.
3. Partnerships are being fostered with local and international organizations for support especially in the provision of technical expertise for evaluation to ensure better use of computer resources around the country.
4. Construction of a listserv and holding periodical e-forums for all club members and patrons to increase participation.
5. Deserving prizes/awards will be given to the best project(s) at the summit. Winning schools from the quiz competitions will also be accordingly awarded.
6. Quarterly news letters/magazines reporting happenings in the clubs will be published. Copies will be sent to clubs and some sold to generate funds. It is hoped that it will stimulate competitive spirit, as prominence will be given to good projects and winning schools.