GIVE1 PROJECT GAMBIA
PROVIDING DIGITAL LITERACY TO YOUNG GIRLS IN GAMBIA

Girls at a Tech camp in Gambia. Photo credit: Give1 Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Give1 Project Gambia is a not-for-profit organization that organizes All Girls Tech camps across Gambia. The project trains young girls aged 13-20 in web design, computer graphics, coding, and database design. Leading women in technology in Gambia give career talks and advice to youth, as part of the tech camp. The initiative brings girls from across the country to participate in training programs, develop information and communications technology (ICT) skills, and be paired with an entrepreneurial mentor. Currently, the initiative serves five schools and provides free training, food, and transportation costs to participants.

Keywords: digital literacy training, gender, Gambia, Africa

CONTEXT

The Gambia is the smallest country on the African continent and among its poorest. According to the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index in 2013, the mean years of schooling for Gambians aged 25 and older was only 2.8 years. Adult literacy was lower among females at 45 percent, as compared to 62 percent in males. The low literacy rate has especially hindered the opportunities available to young women in Gambia.

The Gambian government has strived to adopt ICTs into the national education development framework by partnering with private donors, the public sector, and civil society organizations. In 2016, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, with support from World Bank, launched the project called "Connect-a-school; Connect-a-community" to build six ICT centers in the town of Bakau to provide access to information for underrepresented groups. Nonprofit organizations also promote ICTs in Gambia in many ways. For instance, in 2017, a new Mozilla Club of Hackathon Girls was established in Banjul, the capital of Gambia, to empower girls by providing access to technology resources and web literacy.

Gambia			
Population (UN, 2015)	1,970,081	**Fixed broadband subscriptions (%) (ITU, 2016)**	0.18
Population density (people per sq.km) (UN, 2015)	174.42	**Mobile cellular subscriptions (%) (ITU, 2016)**	139.62
Median household income (Gallup, 2006-2012)	N/A	**Individuals using the Internet (%) (ITU, 2016)**	18.5
Education (Mean years of schooling) (UNDP, 2013)	Male: 3.6 Female: 2.0	**Individuals using the Internet by Gender (%) (ITU, 2016)**	N/A

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The All Girls Tech Camp was launched in 2015 to train young girls in urban and rural areas of Gambia in ICT skills. Educational programs offered at the tech camps include basic ICT skills for beginners, and more advanced training in developing apps, web design, JavaScript, and coding. Volunteer instructors from technology teams are responsible for visiting schools and organizing camps.

The initiative brings girls from across the country to participate in training programs. The camp provides opportunities to learn new skills and develop critical thinking and problem-solving techniques. The pedagogy integrates leadership and entrepreneurial sessions to empower women to start enterprises as well. After each training session, youth participants are assigned to a mentor who encourages and monitors performance. The mentor provides guidance to youth to become a mature woman entrepreneur.

The Tech Camp seeks to empower young women in the ICT sector and raises awareness about opportunities in ICTs. Social media and television publicity about the camps promotes awareness as well. At the end of each camp, an award ceremony is organized with a Give1 Empowerment talk on the importance of ICT training for girls in Gambia and Africa at large.

Project details			
Technology	ICT skills training	**Training**	Basic ICT, coding, java script, web design
Year program started	2015	**Cost to users**	Free
Geography	Urban and rural	**Total cost of program**	Fixed cost: US$ 3,000 Operational cost: US$ 2000
User profile	Girls, ages 13-20	**Associated organizations**	Gambian Minister of the Interior, Google

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

All Girls Tech Camps have been organized at five schools in Gambia and trained more than 500 girls and young women between the ages of 13 and 20.

After a year of operation, All Girls TechCamp won the Gold Fire Award for innovation in Africa, enabling the project to scale up its initiative and expand to other schools in Gambia. They also won a Google grant for US$ 7,000 to support this effort in 2016. As part of the condition of the grant, US$ 4,000 was used as a travel grant to the 2016 Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Guadalajara, Mexico, and US$ 3,000 was used for the training.

At present, Give1 Project is working to create training modules for prisoners in collaboration with the Minister of the Interior. This project is pending due to financial constraints.

They are promoting awareness of the initiative and of the importance of ICT training for girls in Gambian and Africa at large via television and social media, especially Facebook.

CHALLENGES

Lack of sustained funding – The organization reports that demand from the students is high, but there are not enough resources to enroll all of them. A monthly operating cost of $2,000 would be ideal to maintain the project but is not consistently available. Therefore, scaling the project requires additional funding.

Lack of access to devices – Less than 2 percent of the girls in Gambia have access to computers at home, and schools are equipped with limited computer labs. Schools need more computers, and students need resources outside of school to maintain the skills learned at the camp.

GIVE1 PROJECT'S SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

Pairing ICT skills development with entrepreneurship training for women has the capacity to create pathways for women empowerment – The Give1 Project combines ICT skill training with entrepreneurship and leadership training to provide young girls in Gambia with a holistic way forward toward empowerment through ICTs.

ICT education is growing in demand, but often faces critical capacity and funding constraints that must be addressed – Young people see the value of acquiring ICT skills, and as reported by the organization, show an interest in attending these camps. However, people cannot develop ICT skills without access to the technologies they require both within schools and outside them, long after the camps have been conducted. Their experience suggests that schools would benefit from access to technology resources that are apace with modern ICT curricula.

SOURCES

Sowe, A. (2017, August 1) Personal Interview.
Project website: http://www.give1projectgambia.org/
Project video: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNdH5Nlfz8_V7t15P630P2w