

The Computers for Education Forum working with 57 schools in rural Cameroonian Schools (Ngoketunjia, North West Region, Cameroon)

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ABSTRACT

The Computers for Education Forum (COF) (www.cof-cameroon.ning.com) is a framework of 3 partners and 57 schools extending across 7 villages in rural Cameroon. The objective of the framework is to bridge the digital divide through education. As its first phase of activities, the program will run 12 monthly seminars for school teachers. Of the participants 51 schools (89%) do not currently teach computing. Of these 42 schools will introduce computing as a subject through the program. To facilitate this, the program will invite 5-10 teachers from each school to participate in the program and as such will be training 200-400 teachers.

BACKGROUND

Ngoketunjia is a division of 13 villages in the North West region of Cameroon. The region is rural and faces problems of chronic poverty and lack of development. And the technological revolution that promises to be the pathway to development, struggles to gain a foothold in this region. Computer illiteracy and excessively high operating costs in one of the poorest countries in the world, acts as dual barriers to entry. See the article [The Computer Revolution: Struggling for Survival in Rural Cameroon](#).

This program follows the initiatives of the [PCDI](#) (Partners for Community Development Initiative) in sensitizing the population and particularly focusing on education and schools. The program also welcomes [LUKMEF](#) (Limbe, Cameroon) and the International AID Club of the [American University of Dubai](#) as partners.

The Computers for Education Forum (COF) currently extends across 7 of the 13 villages of Ngoketunjia, with 57 participating schools (see Table 1).

Of the 57 schools, only 6 (11%) have computers in their schools and only 6 (11%) teach computing in their schools. Furthermore, 49 schools (86%) lack trained computer teachers.

Table 1: Computers for Education Forum participating schools

Village	# of participating Schools	of which primary/nursery	of which secondary	of which technical/vocational	# of students
Bamunka	16	10	3	2	4406
Bamali	4	3			1685
Bamessing	7	5	1		2046
Babungo	5	4	1		795
Baba I	11	10	1		3998
Babessi	13	10	3		3484
Bangolan	1	1			368
TOTAL	57	43	9	2	16782

THE SEMINARS

The first phase of activities (sponsored by the International AID Club of the American University of Dubai) is in running 12 monthly seminars for school teachers.

Primarily the aim of the seminars is in raising computer literacy amongst the school teachers (74% of the heads of schools participating in the first seminar had never used a computer before). However the seminars will also explore the use of computing as a learning aid in schools (none of the participants of the first seminar had been exposed to this aspect of computing) and computing as an administrative aid.

So as to widen the impact of the program and also to ensure sustainability (against staff turnover) and acceptability, the seminars will involve heads of schools, computer teachers and also other teaching staff. The program for the seminars is below:

Introductory seminar for school heads (December)

Participants: heads of schools

Agenda: Introduction of program and discussion of program

Seminar for heads of schools (January)

Participants: heads of schools

Agenda: Computer awareness, word & excel

Seminar for computer teachers (February)

Participants: computer teachers

Agenda: word, excel, internet

Computers as an administrative tool (March)

Participants: heads of schools, administrative staff

Agenda: computer awareness, word, excel

Computers as a learning aid: literacy & communication (April)

Participants: language staff

Agenda: computer awareness, word, teaching aids

Software continued (May)

Participants: computer teachers

Agenda: MS Publisher, Internet

Computers as a learning aid: numeracy & problem solving (June)

Participants: maths & science teachers

Agenda: computer awareness, word, teaching aids

Computers as a learning aid: literacy & communication (September)

Participants: language staff

Agenda: computer awareness, word, teaching aids

Computers as a learning aid: numeracy & problem solving (October)

Participants: maths & science teachers

Agenda: computer awareness, word, teaching aids

Computers as a learning aid: social sciences (November)

Participants: history, geography

Agenda: computer awareness, word, teaching aids

Computers hardware (December)

Participants: computer teachers

Agenda: networking, maintenance and basic repairs

Computers as a learning aid (January)

Participants: heads of schools, computer teachers

Agenda: teaching aids

EXPECTED IMPACT

The first seminar of the program was held in December 2008 and was aimed at the heads of schools. Through the heads of schools we agreed the agenda of the program and the commitment from each school.

We discussed with the head teachers the importance of widening the impact of the program and ensuring sustainability by training a number of teachers from each school. We then asked the head teachers to estimate the number of teachers that will be trained from their school during the 12 month program:

- 23 schools (40%) agreed to train between 1-5 teachers
- 31 schools (54%) agreed to train between 5-10 teachers
- 2 schools (4%) agreed train more than 10 teachers

As such the program will train between 200-400 teachers.

We discussed how the training will then impact the students.

- 46 schools (86%) agreed to either introduce computer studies as a subject in their school or to review the syllabus being taught as part of the program.
- Of the 51 schools that currently do not teach computer studies, 42 (82%) will introduce computer studies as part of the program.

We then discussed other aspects of computers in education. We discussed computers as a pedagogic tool where computers can impact the learning process and also address structural problems in schools, such as lack of text books etc.

- 45 schools (79%) agreed to introduce computer studies as a learning aid to enhance learning as part of the program

We discussed the impact of computers on the administrative process and the subsequent gains in efficiency.

- 42 schools (74%) agreed to introduce computers as an administrative aid as part of the program

CONCLUSION

These seminars are only the first phase of our activities. For our program to be successful we must also help the schools to overcome the structural problems that will inhibit their efforts. Problems such as lack of computer, lack of text books, lack of facilities (class rooms or electricity).

However, we are confident that by working together and using the demonstrated commitment from the schools, we will have a powerful tool to sensitize the local administration and PTA (Parents Teachers Associations), and thereby we will take a small step to beginning to overcome the disadvantages that are hampering the schools and children of rural Cameroon.

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