

Kids on the Tab: Kenya National Library Service's Tablet Computers Project for Slum School Children

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Abstract

In Kenya, as elsewhere, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have become essential tools in all aspects of life. The education system has a major role to play in providing the ICT knowledge and skills citizens need, and this is reflected in school curricula across Africa, which increasingly include technology studies, technology or ICT as formal, examinable school subjects. In Kenya, the basic and secondary curricula offer a variety of technology and computer studies options. However, technology roll-out has been slow, and schools do not have enough computers or Internet connectivity to keep up with demand. The reasons are many: distance; cost of computers and Internet connections; poor electricity and telecommunication infrastructure. Also, there is resistance by some school managers who fear introducing computers because of maintenance and other costs, and teachers who lack confidence and computer and technology teaching skills. This paper considers the experience and impact of Kenya National Library Service / Kibera Library's e-learning tablet computers project for slum school children, supported by Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) Public Library Innovation Programme. The project uses ICT to equalize opportunities for children of poor families to interact with technology. By pre-loading tablet computers with educational content related to the school curriculum, the project also aims to support classroom teaching across all school subjects (language, science, mathematics, etc.) and to help children improve their marks. The paper discusses implementation of the project, how librarians overcame challenges, including initial resistance from school heads and teachers, and the need to meet children's other basic needs – for food, for quiet space to rest, and a safe place to play – for successful implementation. The paper also considers the impact of the project, which has inspired a love of reading among children, increased the numbers of young library users and contributed to improved school results. It argues that the Kibera community library's experience offers a costeffective, efficient and replicable model for bringing ICT to marginalized children.

Keywords: ICT, Curriculum, Education, Slum, Knowledge, Technology.

Full text: <http://library.ifla.org/862/1/144-kinyanjui-en.pdf>