LAUNCH OF SCHOOL ICT CLUBS -GULU

A Mentorship program to encourage young school girls to embrace Science and Technology

SUPPORTED BY YALI UGANDA CHAPTER

GENDER TECH INITIATIVE UGANDA

Activity Report

About the Organization:

The Gender Tech Initiative Uganda (GTI-U) is a not-for-profit organization based in Gulu, Northern Uganda. GTI-U's mission is to reduce the vulnerability of the digital environment by offering cyber-security and defense awareness training to neutralize advanced threats, thereby contributing to the improvement of digital security for all human rights defenders (HRDs). The organization has 80% of females at the Managerial level, and it also leads in empowering women, young girls, and human right defenders.

GTI-U has been providing leadership in designing, training, implementation, and evaluation of digital safety training for HRDs in the underserved communities within the Northern region of Uganda over the past 5 years. This work has benefited over 400 journalists, 1000 women, and human rights defenders who received pieces of training on digital safety, gender mainstreaming in communication, human rights issues, gender-based violence (GBV), and child protection.

Context Analysis.

In Northern Uganda, the participation of girls in Science/ICT education is still poor. Many of them opt for art subjects or art combinations due to the stereotypes and discrimination that has deprived them off the chance to excel in this field because it's viewed as more suitable for boys and men.

However, this is not clear-cut as this narrative can still be reversed if ICT/STEM is introduced to them when they are still young and undecided on what career options to take.

In April 2021, the Gender Tech Initiative commemorated the girl-in-ICT Day (https://digitalhumanrightslab.org/blog/girls-in-ict-day/), an event that brought together young school girls in Gulu City. It is from this event that we developed the idea to create school ICT clubs that will motivate many young girls to start embracing ICT/STEM at an early age.

In a bid to address these gender disparities and barriers, The US Embassy through the YALI Visibility Fund supported GTI-U with a grant to launch the school ICT-clubs as this will improve the participation and performance of girls in STEM/ICT subjects and develop the capacity of the participating schools in promoting the same. This program is intended to reach out to 250 girls.

This project targeted young school girls between 9-18 years in Upper primary and Lower secondary-level in Gulu district. (We selected this particular group because most of them are still undecided on what career options to pursue, so it's easier to influence their mindsets, motivate & encourage them to consider an ICT/STEM career).

We started by having meetings with the school administrators to sync our activities with that of the calendars of the participating school, then invite tech-savvy role model women to speak to the girls about the merits of an ICT career, organize training sessions on basic computer usage & troubleshooting skills, communication & presentation skills, software installation as they are vital for the club members.

We developed the following guide to run the School ICT Club:

1. We wrote to the school administration seeking for permission to set up an ICT Club in their school.
2. Set up a competent committee within the school to run the club. Created club positions that was filled with responsible students, defined as loyal, smart, and hardworking. These members will plan, build, organise and run the ICT club.
3. Found a club patron. A club patron's role is to guide the ICT club to realise our set goals and direction. We looked for a person who has a natural liking for ICT and an interest in the club activities.
4. We organised various training sessions to empower the club members. Training such as communication skills, presentation skills, computer usage skills, interview and CV writing skills, blog, creating of business documents, software installation, basic computer troubleshooting skills are vital for ICT club members.
5. We then Invited a female role model from the Engineering and Technological sectors to come mentor the ICT club members with support from the Gender Tech Initiative-Uganda.
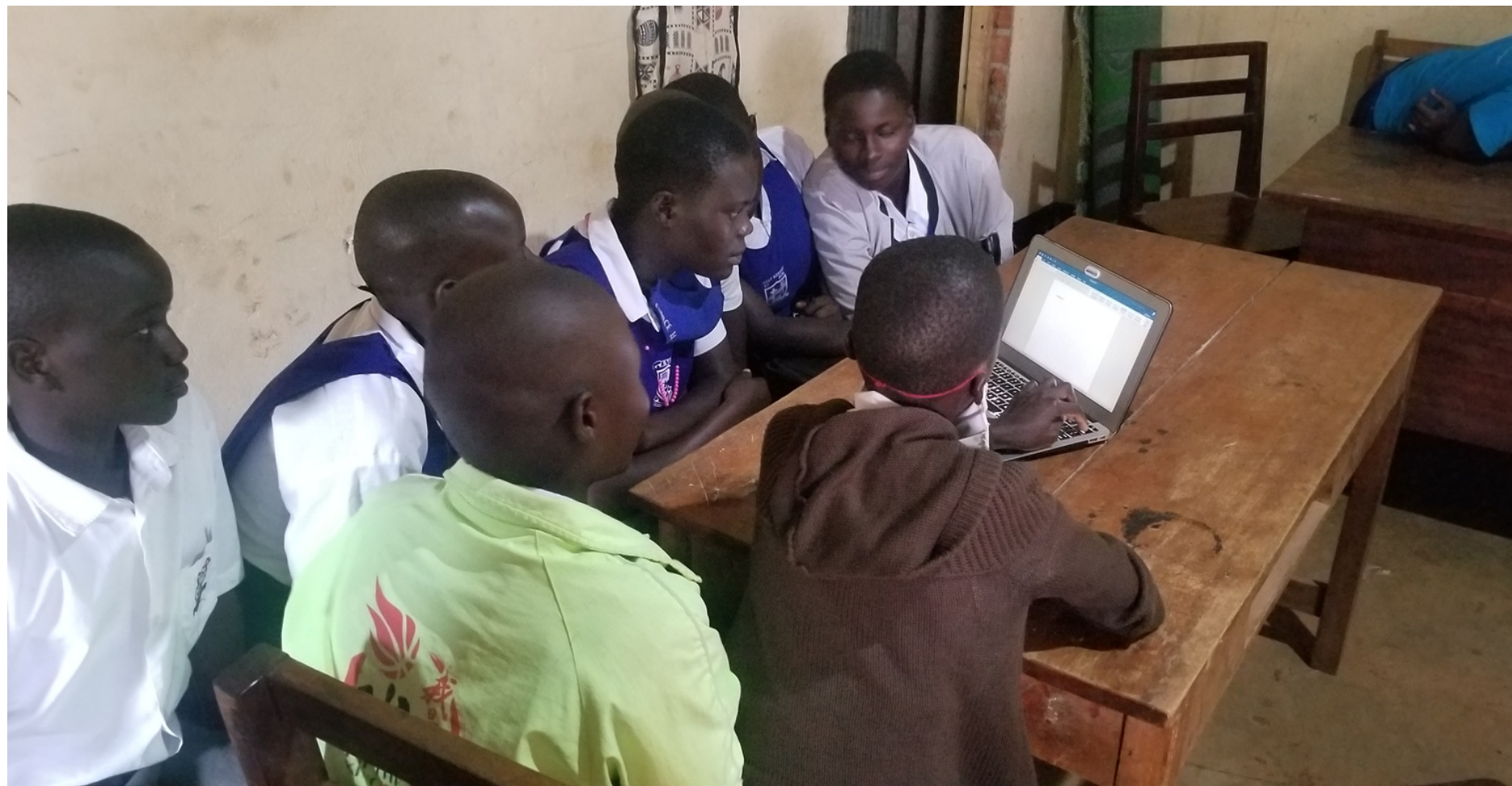
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

We have set the following goals and objectives for the ICT Clubs;

1. To improve the ICT skills of its members by nurturing their creative and programming skills, and sharpening their research and presentation skills.

2. To enable members stay abreast of the latest trends and developments in ICT management.

3. USE the ICT club platform to disseminate ICT knowledge and skills. Integrating student training enterprise in the ICT clubs.

4. To raise awareness and promote the use of technology as a teaching/learning aid.

5. To help students develop as innovative beings who will see problems and create solutions.

6. To help students become competent and confident users of ICT through training sessions.

Project Outcome.

• Enabled creativity and innovation among the young girls. Since young people are dynamic and energetic, by embracing ICT, they have opportunity to accelerate their ability to create and innovate.

•Helped students develop as innovative beings who will see problems and create solutions.

• Developed critical thinking and problem-solving mentality. By being engaged in learning activities, their thinking will be challenged and will come up with solutions to problems with aid of ICT as an invaluable enabler for critical thinking and problem solving.

• Raised awareness and promote the use of technology as a teaching/learning aid.

Project outcome.......Cont

- 1 (one) school teacher from each school was appointed as the patron of the ICT Club.
- The patron pledged to host the club activities every Friday so that the club is not dormant.
- We printed and distributed branded YALI T-shirts and this will help to increase the visibility of YALI.
- 250 girls from the 5 selected schools benefited from were reached and benefited from the launch of the ICT clubs.
- The school and administrators got to learn about YALI and what it is all about.

Project Challenges

- The school Holiday delayed our project completion.
- Most school administrators thought that we had a big budget so that expected money from the project.
- Most girls had higher expectations and expected the project to pay their tuition.

Recommendations.

All our projects were very good but had a limited time frame. There is a lot that needs to be done within our different communities, so I would recommend that we are given more time to do the activities.

Conclusion

The school ICT Clubs will improve the participation and performance of girls in STEM/ICT subjects and develop the capacity of the participating schools in promoting the same. We are grateful to the EXCO Team, US Embassy for enabling us to start this project.

We also want to applaud BRUNO for traveling from Kampala all the way to Gulu to oversee our first activity.