The Social Impacts of Computer Technology in Africa

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Special Presentation for CISters and ACM

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Keta, Ghana, West Africa
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Anloga, Ghana, West Africa

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- Cross-Cultural Solutions (CCS)
- http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/
- What I did:
  - Observed and taught basic computer skills to a class of 50+ rural high school students.
  - Taught MS Office skills to the administrative assistants at Anloga Technical Institute.
  - Tutored in-country CCS staff in Windows XP and MS Office.
  - Fixed a lot of computer bugs.
- What I also did:
  - Learned a lot about West African culture and learned some Ewe (a regional language, office language is English).
The World Social Forum (WSF) is an annual meeting held by members of anti-globalization movements to coordinate world campaigns, share and refine organizing strategies, and inform each other about movements from around the world and their issues. It tends to meet in January when its “great capitalist rival”, the World Economic Forum is meeting in Davos, Switzerland. This is not a coincidence. The date was chosen because of the logistical difficulty of organizing a mass protest in Davos and to try to overshadow the coverage of the World Economic Forum in the news media (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Social_Forum).

The digital divide—the gap between those with regular, effective access to digital technologies and those without—has become a barrier to development and progress for many, particularly those in regions lacking these resources. The gap between those who can access digital technologies and those who cannot can lead to unequal opportunities and a fragmented society. This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed to ensure inclusive growth and development.

Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize winner for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace, has been a leading figure in this struggle. Her work and advocacy have focused on environmental issues, particularly in Kenya, where she led efforts to plant millions of trees as part of the Green Belt Movement. Her dedication to this cause has inspired countless individuals and organizations around the world to work towards sustainable development and environmental protection.

In the context of the World Social Forum, discussions and debates revolve around creating an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, and exchange of experiences on social healing on an international scale. Groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism are encouraged to work together to demonstrate that the path to sustainable development, social and economic justice lies in alternative models for people-centered and self-reliant progress.
Kenya, East Africa

Emergence of Digital Citizenship

- An electronic medical record system for ambulatory care for HIV-infected patients in Kenya
  - Enrolled its first patient in Nov 2001
  - Africa's first ambulatory electronic medical record system in a rural Kenyan health center
  - Programmed in Visual Basic and MS Access
- Assessment of Internet-based tele-medicine in Africa (the RAFT project)
  - Initiated in 2001 by the Mali University Medical School in Bamako, Mali
  - Wireless metropolitan area network in Bamako, Linux-based servers, powered by infrastructure and hardware
  - Collected, learning tropical medicine "e-course" developed at the University of Geneva, Switzerland
  - To include the talented medical professionals of developed countries to go to critical regions which are often rural and far from capitals
  - To create study-adapted medical content, most information published on the Internet is not applicable in rural settings
- Digital citizenship is individual in a Northern context, and collective in a Southern context
- Participation in democracy by engaging rural society in ICT
- Development of NGOs for the development of the community
- Distance learning tropical medicine "e-course" developed at the University of Geneva, Switzerland
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Independent Study Research

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Independent Study Research (2)

- Closing the digital divide; evaluation of the World Links program
  - The World Links Program, the World Bank's pilot program, connected a Ugandan high school with a school in the US
  - The most visible contribution of the World Links program is the donation of computer hardware and software
  - In Uganda, the use of computers is not in the curriculum or in the school
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  - These programs have been successful in helping to integrate ICT into school curricula
  - The success of these programs has been due to the development of these programs
- Kenya, East Africa

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- What I did:
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  - I organized an independent study and spent Christmas vacation researching into global information and computer technology (ICT)
  - Throughout the world
  - I attended the WSF, a 5-day global conference focusing on sustainable development and social and economic justice
  - I volunteered at the orphanage "New Life" through the non-profit government organization (NGO) Musalia Rural Development Organization (MRDO)
  - I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro at the end of the day
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Questions???

Thank you

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