Establishment of Computer Labs in War Affected Regions of Cameroon: Submitted by Kenneth Ndzedzeni

1. Background
The arrival of personal computers (PCs) a quarter of a century ago turned everyone (theoretically) into a potential computer user. It was inevitable that these PCs would be linked to the Internet, which had been established in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s and ‘90s, the PC - Internet combination converted the Internet from a tool used only in military and academic circles into the global phenomenon we are still trying to come to terms with today. This, in turn, has changed the nature of the PC (and its most popular applications) from being predominantly a processing tool into a powerful and highly flexible communications platform.

Focusing on the development of the digital economy through the implementation of digital education is a priority in Africa especially Cameroon, acknowledging that the digital economy segment can be developed more easily and progressively than others (a mobile app can be developed in a garage by a single person). Furthermore, implementing digital education for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) also supports the acquisition of digital skills.

Finally, economic growth not only relies on core competencies in STEM, but also on transversal skills, which can effectively be developed through specific forms of digital education, such as inquiry learning and competence-based education. This is also in line with the Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 that is part of the long-term African Union Agenda 2063, underpinned by science, technology, and innovation as “multifunction tools and enablers”, as well as with the 2030 Global Education Goal of UNESCO’s programme Education for All.

It goes without question that digital education requires the availability of proper information and communication infrastructures and services. In Africa, these infrastructures and services are developed concurrently with their exploitation in digital education by following a mobile-first approach, i.e., mobile devices and 4G networks are supported in priority.

2. Introduction
The entire world has and is still experiencing a technological shift leading to proficiency in computers. Technology is now a prerequisite and computer illiteracy prevent children from competing in the modern economy. Opportunity of and access to a digital learning environment is crucial for employment but social life as well. Computer labs for schools/Communities is an initiative to reduce the digital gap in access to - or quality of - technology between countries by introducing and improving the use of computers in the school environment.
We are a non-profit organization, and we are using technology to build micro-tech communities around web technologies in rural areas in the Northwest and South west war affected regions of Cameroon. The Northwest and Southwest Regions of the country that has been ravaged by war and kids have lost five years of school. We decided to build technology communities to enhance skills. Parents are out of ideas because of the ongoing conflict; this program has empowered kids in primary school and students who want to build a career in technology. Children are the leaders of tomorrow and a break in their educational career will influence what would become of them in the future. We have helped the children to be able to maximize their technological potentials as the world we now live evolve daily in terms of technology. Our world is gradually becoming a world of technology such that anyone who is not skilled would find it difficult to thrive in. We want to help children thrive in terms of technology.

3. Project Initiation
This Project of building computer labs was started in later days of July 2022 and its first phase was scheduled to complete by the mid of October. With the support of Mcquade Foundation, NOKIDBEHIND Inc. helped achieve this goal. We identified schools in the community and created school technology clubs through their ambassadors/volunteers, allowing children to use basic computer tools to think smartly. After listening to the stories of different children from different regions, we decided to create NOKIDBEHIND Inc platform to connect with children in rural areas and build communities around technology tools to improve them and better prepare for the future.

The timeline of the project is shown below. We divided the whole project in 5 segments to help us understand clearly how to proceed with it.

4. Budget Utilization
Being on the tight budgets, we tried to maximize our potential and achieved as better as we could. The total budget for this project was $30000. The major chunk of the budget was used in Repainting
some rooms, Benches, 32 laptops for four different locations. Four computer labs in four different communities. Some major breakdown points are discussed below.

• Setting up of four Classrooms: We renovated/furnished four classrooms with computer benches and each of them with 8 laptops and with study software and programs that kids will be able to familiarise their basic computing knowledge with. We created a team of volunteers to help set-up the computers, install programs and facilitate kids on how to operate them. Transportation of furniture.

• Internet: We have set up internet connections to the classrooms or install an internet modem every month through the program to enable the kids access study material with restrictions to certain sites that are not applicable for them. NOKIDBEHIND Inc. partnered with “MTN” an internet service provider company and got Wi-Fi modems for four labs.

• Generator: We also invested in getting a Generator for each computer lab as most of these areas usually have interruption of continuous electricity. During that period of loadshedding it is made sure that generators provide enough power for the period the kids are in class.
• Other expenses: Other expenses included running cots such as utility bills, office supplies, Transportation. etc.

The breakdown of total expenses is shown below in a chart for better visualization.

![Expenditure Chart]

5. Computer Labs/Students
There are four communities/schools where computer labs have been created.

- Shisong Community (Kingomen) Primary School NW Region Cameroon
- Alive Orphanage Buea, SW Region Cameroon
- Government School, Ntarikon Bamenda NW Region
- Buea Town Community School SW Region

In this phase of promoting computer literacy, we provided 32 laptops and 8 laptops for each one of these four communities. The span for the first phase of this program was from Jul-Oct 2022. For now, current enrolment of students in our three communities has reached up to 200 students.

With the implementation of second phase of this project, which is due to complete in March of next year, our anticipated growth of students is expected to reach around 350 students.

The Graph below shows the number of students reached and students anticipated to reach within next phase of project. (Dotted line shows the anticipated projection over coming months)
Kingomen Community (Surburbs in British Southern Cameroon war zone)

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