Country: Ghana  
Middlebury College  
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This project was meant to be a 2-week (9-day) training program that aims to give high school students in Accra a chance at the tech world. Our ultimate goal was to contribute to peace and sustainable development by providing participants with digital skills (in the form of training and mentorship) and information on ways to subsequently leverage those skills for economic gains. Two out of the three co-leads (Rupert and Nathaniel) were born and raised in Ghana, so they have first-hand experience with the struggles associated with the schooling system and economy - especially the lack of exposure to tech-related education and job opportunities. As of now, we aim to continue to be an outlet for the participants of <code_gh> by connecting them with leaders, professors, and experienced personnel within their field of interest.

Our initial approach was based on teaching the participants a few skills such as an introduction to coding in Python and UI/UX design. In fact, we originally coined the project as a “tech exploration boot camp”. Over months of planning, <code_gh> evolved into more of a training program because the participants could gain more from also learning soft skills. We determined that <code_gh> would have a lasting impact if the participants learned how to market themselves. This allows them to be more open to future job opportunities and expand the network of Ghanaian youth who are interested in tech, creating a self-sustaining system that addresses the issues we want to resolve.

Our host site was the University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA). We chose this site because it is well known and centralized. Accra is the most populous city in Ghana and is home to the most students, so outreach became slightly easier because of the location. The faculty and staff at UPSA were a great help during the project; oftentimes going out of their way to ensure that everything was running smoothly and assisting whenever there were physical or technical difficulties. Initially, we had planned to host at the University of Ghana, but prior relationships and communication with a couple of professors at UPSA helped us to ensure that the computer laboratory would be secured for the time period of the training program. These relationships compounded upon themselves and eventually led to the approval of us providing daily breakfast and lunch to the participants.

Logistically, the personnel that agreed to come to speak or teach were always present and made phenomenal progress for the time they were given. A typical day started with breakfast from 9 am - 10 am, followed by a lecture about a certain topic (AI, GIS, Robotics, etc.) which usually went from 10 to noon. Subsequently, there was a speaker in the afternoon followed by an activity based on the morning lecture. Lunch was served around 2 pm, at the end of the day. Throughout the day, time was set aside for small breaks.

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Reflection:
We define peace as a means for an individual or group to freely pursue positive practices. This can be achieved in different ways. Our project promotes peace through education. This allows participants to
make a positive change in their lives, as well as the lives of others. Ghanaian culture is based on respect and strong family values. So, potential future economic gains and knowledge gained through attending the program will surely have a branching effect. We hope to hold a similar event on a larger scale within the foreseeable future.

There were many challenges associated with planning and executing the project. For one, finding participants was difficult despite our efforts to host in a prime location. We assumed this to be mostly a matter of trust - potential participants not being sure if a free educational program was legitimate. The participant count grew from 14 on the first day to over 30 by the last day, and ages ranged from 10 years old to 20 years old. There was also a day that we hosted about seven or eight children, on short notice, from a local elementary school to experience the robotics portion of the program. There were times when the power in Accra would go out, creating a reset in all of the computers. It never lasted too long and the staff at UPSA worked swiftly to make sure everything was running smoothly when the power returned.

<code_gh> has helped us to see the world from an opportunistic lens. There are many people who have the desire to do great things and make a positive and impactful change but don't have the resources or opportunities to make it happen. It has become our goal to continue to seek opportunities that will give others an opportunity to reach their goals.

Personal Statements from the team:

“On the last day of the program, two girls were building on the knowledge from the UIUX session and were creating wireframes for a parallel of the Uber app in Ghana. A parent also shared his excitement about how his daughter would quickly practice everything she learned when she got home. Stories like these capture the impact of the program for me. I’m excited that we had the privilege to be a part of these students’ success story.” - Nathaniel Wullar

“On the first day, we gave the students the opportunity to state their expectations for the program. We had almost 75% of the students expressing their interest in Artificial Intelligence and considering that Dominica and I were handling that session, I was perturbed. I was hoping our lecture and demonstrations would be able to meet their enthusiasm and excitement for A.I., however, we surpassed it. The feedback was eye-watering. Most of the students kept asking, “when are we having another A.I. session?, can I be your mentee?, can I become a self-taught A.I. Engineer?” and the like. At that point I knew that the purpose for which we decided to take on this endeavor was achieved; to expose them to various fields in tech and to provide them with resources on how to build upon these interests and skills after the program. I was gruntled we were able to make a positive contribution to the futures of these participants.” - Rupert Tawiah-Quashie

“There are so many people who yearn for opportunities that many of us, living in the United States, take for granted. This is something that I’ve always known, but never truly understood until doing this project. Hard working and talented students are prevalent all over the world. but there is no platform for a large percentage of them to hone their skills and use those skills to their advantage. <code_gh> made me realize that there is so much fulfillment in using your resources to help others in an impactful way.” - Kevin Ntoni
Section II: Photographs