Project Title: Girls Empowerment through Computer Literacy  
Country of Implementation: Sierra Leone  
Sponsoring College: Concordia College  
Project Leader: Daniel Monya Pambu, Sierra Leone, Concordia College

Background

Sierra Leone is a country with a young population, with a median age of 19. Girls and young women in Sierra Leone are often faced with a myriad of challenges, including access to healthcare, education, etc. After the Civil War and Ebola outbreak, Sierra Leone has been trying to make progress in education, with policies like the Free Quality School Education which allows students access to Education without fees. Also, efforts to address barriers that affect participation of girls in education has helped improve the number of girls who enroll and stay in school, overcoming some of the marginalization due to pregnancy, disability, and poverty.

However, the integration of technology into schools has been slow, especially when it comes to rural and all-girls schools. I count myself lucky to have attended a school that offered Information Communication Technology classes, but this is not the reality for most schools in Sierra Leone. This is a global concern that is manifested locally in Sierra Leone. Countries like Sierra Leone lag behind the globe with access to digital technology, while within Sierra Leone itself, girls face even more challenges. There is a need for students in Sierra Leone, and especially girls, to gain experience with computers, software, and the internet. This is needed to improve girls' job and career prospects, reducing gender inequality, and to improve both the economy and human capital in Sierra Leone. Currently, students without computer literacy find it difficult to succeed in university.

Growing up in Sierra Leone, I have experienced and seen what it is like to lack access to computers and digital technologies. This became a special interest of mine while studying at a UWC college. At Concordia, I’ve learned more in classes about the digital divide and gender inequality. My acquaintance with the founder of the Sengbe Pieh Academy in Sierra Leone helped to spark this project idea.

THE PROJECT

This project seeks to reduce the digital divide by improving girls access to computers and computer applications in one high school for girls, Sengbe Pieh Academy. Computers will be provided to the school, along with a generator (for use only during electricity outages) and furniture for a new computer classroom. A partnership with RaBit Education will build a new course and provide mentoring opportunities to the students. Initial training sessions for students will be provided. The project aims to provide rural high school girls with a computer laboratory and curriculum where they will acquire basic skills to help them prepare to navigate the university and job market as graduates.

Sengbe Pieh Academy for girls is in Robis Lungi in Port Loko District of Northwest Province in Sierra Leone. This town is 76 miles away from the country’s capital city Freetown. This high school is an all-girls institution with 75 students aged 15-20 years. It aims to provide a quality Education through civic and female empowerment, critical thinking, and international exposure. It was founded by the nonprofit Jeneba Project, run by UWC graduate Joseph Kaifala. It was founded in 2018.

RaBit Education is an educational club by students at the University of Sierra Leone that seeks to provide practical Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning to other students. RaBit Education provides academic and career mentorship while working to increase access to STEM skills across the country. Their focus is on teaching girls computer skills and applied knowledge such as robotics.

IMPLEMENTATION

The project will be implemented over a period of six weeks, with four phases.
Phase 1:
- Procure laptop computers, a generator, and furniture (made locally).
- Meetings with the different stakeholders and partners – RaBit Education volunteers, Sengbe Pieh Academy, and local community stakeholders.
- Development of the teaching curriculum for Introductory skills in Information Technology.

Phase 2:
- Establishment of the Computer Lab, setting up of laptops and connections.
- Training of Trainers. In collaboration with the RaBit Education volunteers, we will be training the staff of the school who would be teaching the students over the school year.

Phase 3:
- A “boot camp” will be held for students. Students will be given some initial training based on a curriculum containing an introduction to computers and Microsoft Office applications (Word, PowerPoint, Excel). A primary goal of this initial training will be to inspire the students and generate excitement.
- Under the supervision of trainers, students will undertake mini projects in groups and do a presentation for others on what they have learned during the training sessions and in their project work.
- The boot camp will end with sessions on networking and careers, followed by a presentation of certificates to participants (Students and Staff), and evaluation of the program by students.

Phase 4:
- Discussions with partners on continuing the partnership over the coming year.
- Work with Sengbe Pieh Academy to ensure that everything is in place to support the computers and the new course during the coming year.

**Expected Outcomes**

This project aims to achieve the following outcomes:
- Establish a computer center with laptops so that the school has the infrastructure needed to support education for computer literacy
- Develop a curriculum for basic information technology and computer literacy that will lead to the addition of a new course that will attract more girls to enroll in school and in STEM specifically. This will provide skills to present and future students at the school that will help prepare them for success in university and their life journey.
- Train school staff so that they can teach basic computer literacy.
- Build a long-lasting relationship between the school and RaBit Education and develop networks between the girls and the university students who are part of the RaBit Education Club.

**FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The decision to work with Sengbe Pieh Academy was because of their strong mission and work already done in providing and improving the quality of education for girls in the country, and also their firm belief in radical inclusion. In recent years, they have graduated girls that have gone to colleges and universities across the country, and all of these have been achieved because of the effective management of the school and partners. They have also allocated a room to set up this computer laboratory to show how timely and paramount it is as they secure these materials. For all these reasons, I am very confident that it will be used and managed well for the benefit of all learners. The RaBit Education will be a driving force in this project, and they will do follow-ups with the students and the school. RaBit Education will also be doing regular checks on the laptops to install updated software tools and curricula needed for teaching and learning in the classroom.