

Empowering Young Minds through Computer Literacy
Pakistan
Gettysburg College
Shanzae Sarwar (Pakistan, Gettysburg College)

Section I:

a. *A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project.*

The goal of my project was to build a computer facility with updated computers and projectors that students can use to advance their computer education and facilitate learning through a technological environment.

b. *Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?*

I did not use additional fund-raising efforts to contribute to this project. Since I was able to complete this project remotely from the United States, I used the \$1000 funds allocated for my flight expenses towards the completion of this project.

c. *How did you come up with the idea for your project?*

I grew up in Pakistan and while I was fortunate enough to attend school and receive an education, the same is not true for many children from rural areas and poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Many children from underprivileged backgrounds cannot afford to go to school and often start working at a young age. Receiving education is a human right and everyone should have the opportunity to attend school. I wanted to come up with a project that would help advance children's education.

d. *Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists?*

Pakistan is a developing country where people from rural areas live in extreme poverty. When a person is born into poor socioeconomic conditions, it is extremely difficult to break out of this cycle of poverty. Parents simply don't have the money to send their children to school. Other barriers such as distance and safety also play a factor in rural communities, where children must walk long distances in the extreme heat to attend school. Young girls are instead made to help with household chores while young boys are made to get odd jobs to help keep the family afloat. Due to all these reasons, Pakistan has one of the highest rates of out-of-school children.

e. *Why did you choose your host site to work in?*

I had heard of the nonprofit organization 'Dream to Education for All' which recruits high school volunteers to teach summer classes to underprivileged students and eventually expanded to open Qadam Community School. I believe in this organization's mission statement to stop child labor and give every child access to education. DTEFA's work in advancing children's education is why I partnered with them to complete this project.

a. *What was it like to work in your host site?*

I was not able to travel to Pakistan to oversee this project. Instead, I completed this project remotely and communicated with my partner organization through Zoom and email. I communicated with my partner organization at least twice a week and we were able to collaborate to see the completion of this project.

f. *Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways?*

When transferring the funds to DTEFA, the international bank wire transfer ended up taking longer than expected. When the bank received the money, it had to be sent back to Gettysburg College due to new banking laws in Pakistan. Although this created challenges that were unforeseen, I was able to work with Gettysburg College to find another way of transferring the funds to DTEFA.

g. *What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people?*

During the summer, many public holidays fell during the months of June and August, including Eid al-Adha and Muharram. Due to these holidays, there were some delays in communicating with the bank regarding the transfer of funds.

h. How do you define peace?

Peace is the ability to live freely, without having to worry about basic human rights such as access to food, water, security, education, and shelter.

i. How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?

My project will help underprivileged students have access to advanced computer equipment, furniture, internet, printers, projectors, and books to better facilitate their education and learning. This equipment will be used by students for many years to come. By supporting the right to education, my project is contributing to one of the elements of peace.

a. Please describe changes created by the project during the summer.

Initially, I had planned to buy the computer equipment in time to facilitate computer classes over the summer. However, due to the delay in receiving the funds, we were only able to purchase the computer equipment and set it up in the facility. However, this equipment will be used throughout the year by Qadam Community School during their annual school year. This facility will be open after school hours as a public space for students to use the computers and internet. Although we had initially planned to buy computer desktops, due to regular power shortages, this was not a feasible plan. Therefore, we used the funds to purchase laptops instead. We were also able to use some of the funds to purchase a yearly subscription to computer coding classes for the older students.

b. Please describe anticipated changes that will continue in the future as a result of the project.

Because of the new computer facility, Qadam Community School will have a greater focus on teaching classes that build computer skills and incorporate it into the everyday curriculum. This is very important in today's rapidly changing and technologically advanced world.

j. Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?

This project has only reinforced my belief in being passionate about social justice issues and engaging in efforts, no matter how big or small, to help my community. I truly believe that there is no better way to make a difference than to start with my own local community.

k. Was your project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted my travel during the summer.

a. If yes, please describe any impacts you and/or community members engaged in your experienced.

I had initially planned to travel to Pakistan to complete this project. However, since I am an international student, I was hesitant to travel to Pakistan due to the changing government and safety regulations, and the uncertainty this created regarding my ability to reenter the United States. However, I was able to use Zoom and email to collaborate with both Gettysburg College and my partner organization to successfully oversee this project.

b. How did you advance your projects goals despite these challenges?

Throughout this past year at college, I was able to personally see how much we can accomplish through Zoom despite geographical barriers. This provided me the encouragement to complete my project remotely using Zoom to communicate effectively with my partner organization.

i. What advice would you give to future PfP grantees given the pandemic-related challenges you experienced?

With technology, we are more interconnected now than ever. I would encourage future PfP grantees to use all the technology and resources available to them to think outside the box and not be afraid to come up with new and creative ideas.

- c. *If you were able to implement your project remotely, speak to the highlights and challenges of a conducting a remote project.*

At times, communication was challenging especially when coordinating across different time zones. It was also difficult not being on-site and not being able to see the day-to-day impact of my project. What helped facilitate the project was being able to work with multiple people remotely at my partner organization and utilizing a team effort to collaborate with each other. Despite the different time zones, we were able to set up a good schedule for checking-in with each other's progress and following up with new ideas, questions, and concerns.

- l. *Provide a one- to two-sentence personal statement.*

"Every child has the right to attend school, where they can foster their curiosity, unlock their imagination and pursue their dreams." ~Shanzae Sarwar

- m. *Team leader full name along with associated permanent contact email address for our PfP alumni database.*

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