Better World Showcase 2018

Demonstrating how the Faculty of Science & Engineering is Making a Difference

Project Malawi

Initiative

Project Malawi is a pioneering, subject-led, international outreach initiative. A team of staff and student volunteers from the School of Computer Science (SoCS) visited Malawi in Central Africa to bring Computer Science education to Malawian schools.

Over the past few years, the SoCS's Computing At School team has developed considerable expertise in delivering the subject of computing to UK schools, schoolteachers and schoolchildren. Based on this expertise, staff and student volunteers, in co-operation with RIPPLE Africa, have developed material for Project Malawi, sourced funding and equipment, built connections, developed plans, and visited Malawi this summer in a pilot project.

Despite the preparations and travel being "exciting" - all equipment had to be transported from the UK; electric power, lighting, and transport in Malawi were unreliable and difficult; the children had never touched a computer or keyboard - this pilot was a great success: the team visited four schools, taught over 200 children (40% female, forms 1-4) in 50 sessions, and set up a networked lab for a school. Children developed computer programs in a variety of languages. The pilot clearly showed the feasibility of the scheme and directions for future development. Planning for Project Malawi 2018 has already begun.

How Project Malawi has Made a Difference

Malawi is the poorest country in the world (in terms of GDP per head). School education does not include subjects such as Computer Science. We delivered educational sessions in schools in northern Malawi, using exciting equipment (minicomputers, robots, programmable vehicles, etc) transported from the UK. We also included "unplugged sessions" such as teaching algorithms through dance and music! By the end of the visit, students, who had never touched a computer before, were writing programs in a variety of languages. A key factor in lifting countries out of poverty is education, and this pilot scheme showed that a team of staff and students delivering computing in schools in Malawi can be highly successful.

http://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/project-malawi/

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