

Computers 4 Africa

2007 Vision & Strategy

During 2006 and moving into 2007 we are privileged to continue to work for *Microsoft* project managing and acting as the secretariat for its “Digital Pipeline” (DP) initiative. We have played a central role since its inception as a Microsoft project in 2004 and intend to form it into an independent charity in its own right during the year ahead.

We are exploring the possibility of a donation from the Department for Work and Pensions through EDS, potentially to be refurbished by Remploy and shipped to schools and community projects all over Africa.

Our staff have experience of working with *Microsoft* since 1997 and a long-term relationship of trust and confidence has developed over the years. This is based on proven delivery in-time and on-budget, the highest quality standards and transparent accountability.

Our expertise in PC refurbishing, international logistics, web design, database development, charity management and company secretarial services has helped make Digital Pipeline a success. This success is very much to the credit of Microsoft, EDS, Remploy, RDC, Computer Aid and Digital-Links who are all excellent supporters and partners in this worthwhile project.

Digital Pipeline is the most advanced environmentally friendly and socially responsible option if you have more than 50 PCs to donate. A proportion of donated PCs are sold to pay for tracking and to create a fund for the end-of-life recycling of PCs in the recipient country.

Seeking other corporate partnerships we approached B&Q at the beginning of 2006 and discovered that each year they select one member of staff out of their 40,000 employees who has been volunteering for charity and appoint them as the B&Q ‘Hero of the Year’. B&Q pays them their full salary while they work full-time for the charity concerned and supports them with contributions etc.

For 2006 B&Q selected Aseri Katanga, known as ‘AK’. His dream was to provide computers to the schools in the area around his village and home town of Bukoba in North West Tanzania. Aseri had been collecting PCs in his garden shed and neighbour’s garages, then loading a 20’ container on a lorry in front of his semi-detached home blocking his whole street. He did this in his spare time and at his own expense.

B&Q suppliers donated sufficient materials and a team of B&Q staff volunteered to go to Tanzania and build an IT classroom at Tweyambe School from scratch – which they did in 2006. B&Q also sponsored a generator and donated hundreds of PCs.

We have teamed up to extensively work with Aseri as B&Q's 'Hero of the Year' on an ongoing basis and are also most grateful to B&Q for allowing us the continuing use of their empty sites on a minimal rent basis. They have also donated their own IT equipment in such quantity to enable complete IT Classrooms to be fitted out with PCs at other schools as well.

Some schools do not have extra classrooms in which to put PCs, or even if they do the rooms are not secure. A few may have been stolen a few days after they were deployed. This is disappointing for the donors concerned and especially for us after all our work in appealing for donations, refurbishing, datawiping, finding appropriate deployment opportunities and shipping them. This defeats our purpose and we are discovering the need to deliver secure IT rooms as well as the computers to go in them to be successful and achieve our objects.

A solution will be to use converted shipping containers as IT classrooms. The original idea was inspired by seeing internet cafes based inside shipping containers in South African townships in 2006. Fortunately having the use of B&Q's empty warehouses has enabled us to take containers directly into these sites as they are quite big and have plenty of space inside them.

We are trying to find sponsors for the containers and while this has not taken off yet, we are still hopeful for the future of this initiative. Ideally we will soon have an example of a 20' container converted into an internet cafe and a 40' container already converted into an IT Classroom to show potential funders.

George Cook
Chief Executive
15th December 2006