"I use a solar panel to charge a battery so I can study at nighttime. Now I have a bigger battery that will last longer, but it will not take any charge from the solar. Can I fix it?"—#PeaceHackCamp Participant

Lagu Stephen of KMIC introduces a session at the 2015 #PeaceHackCamp

The "Code Room" was full of activity throughout the three day #PeaceHackCamp

The #PeaceHackCamp was an initiative of Kapital Movie Industry Corporation (KMIC), a local South Sudanese organization founded on the principle of peer-to-peer learning. "We were students at the university, but the campus was frequently shut down for long periods due to strikes," says Lagu Stephen, founder of KMIC. "After a while, we decided we needed to keep busy and just teach ourselves." They developed a passion for open source education resources, which alongside video and ICT activism became the driving force behind the organization.

At the beginning of 2015, KMIC was operating without an office, but still managing to conduct workshops and trainings from Lagu's cramped single room residence. There was no shortage of young people willing to learn—and to teach—even if the resources were not there. "We wanted a space where we could meet and practice the sorts of things we were learning about online," says Lagu. After successfully applying to Internews' South Sudan Small Grants program, these plans were able to become a reality. An office was established, including facilities for workshops and training, and the #PeaceHackCamp began to take shape. During the course of 2015, workshops were conducted on ICT activism and video production, and a great deal of planning and networking took place.

The #PeaceHackCamp was an international event, with participants and presenters coming to Juba from around Africa and the world.

"South Sudan is a long way behind other places in the world, but we mustn't let ourselves be left behind. We must work hard to catch up!"—#PeaceHackCamp participant

The level of planning involved can be seen just from the attendance list, which included participants not only from across South Sudan, but from around the world. In collaboration with KMIC's open culture and social innovation partners r0g_agency and the IceHub network, visitors traveled from Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Norway, Germany, Rwanda, Zambia, and even as far away as Colombia, making the #PeaceHackCamp a truly international event. Many of the foreign visitors represented tech spaces and innovation labs, such as the iHub in Nairobi, the BongoHive in Lusaka or IceAddis in Addis Ababa, and brought with them a range of skills, ideas and experiences to share with their South Sudanese counterparts. The huge level of interest and enthusiasm demonstrated during the #PeaceHackCamp makes one thing clear—despite the enormous challenges faced, there is an emerging tech community in South Sudan. In fact, there is a palpable sense of urgency about it. As Lagu points out, "If we wait until everyone in this country is connected, it will be too late. The time to think different is now. The time to take action is now!" There is evidence to support this feeling of being part of the zeitgeist. In 2013, just 3% of South Sudanese had ever accessed the Internet. In less than two years, by early 2015, despite the outbreak of civil war and the threat of economic collapse, this number had tripled. The figures may still seem incredibly small, but in South Sudan's starved media landscape, the small number of weekly Internet users (7%) is rapidly gaining on the weekly reach of more established media such as newspapers (10%) and television (13%). As mobile phone penetration continues to grow, online resources will no doubt play an increasing role in how South Sudanese access and communicate information. A wealth of ideas and plans were stimulated during the #PeaceHackCamp and many valuable connections were formed as ad-hoc meetings and sessions developed. One particularly fruitful discussion was held around the development of the "j-HUB," a planned "open techspace" for Juba, where developers and entrepreneurs will be able to meet and access the Internet and other resources.

Meanwhile, the #PeaceHackCamp concept will soon be exported from South Sudan to Colombia, with a similar event planned in that nation in 2016. Interest has also been expressed in holding a sister event in Afghanistan. The #PeaceHackCamp may have a claim to be South Sudan's first tech export. If the participants have their way, it will be the first of many. Internews support to KMIC through the Small Grants program was part of the USAID i-STREAM project, Strengthening Independent Media in South Sudan. jHUB, South Sudan's first open knowledge and innovation space, forms part of KMIC's "Step-Up Juba Media Lab" project, supported by the German Federal Ministry of International Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Participants in a session on entrepreneurship list the challenges they face daily—access to electricity and internet top the lists, followed by insecurity and currency devaluation.