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Peacebuilding & Technology



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PEACEBUILDING & TECHNOLOGY



PEACEBUILDING AND TECHNOLOGY

#TECH4PEACE

#PeaceTech, #Tech4peace are terms that have been widely used in a variety of contexts and places, but mainly used to refer to the use of people and communities to technology in the processes of peacebuilding. This why a peace tech is another tool, that might otherwise be used to ignite conflicts, which can be instead pro-actively used in peacemaking.

“PeaceTech’s point of departure is that technology, per say, is not inherently good or bad, powerful or not; it is people’s decisions that have the power to design, use or misuse technology – and influence where it leads us” (Berns, 2015:3)

#PeaceHackCamp South Sudan



The first **#PeaceHackCamp** was held from Nov 30 to Dec 2, 2015 in Juba, South Sudan; Free and open to the public.

As hacking means finding new and innovative solutions; in hacking peace, where peace is elusive, we want to help re-open the window of opportunity in the world’s newest country for a peaceful, just and prosperous future!

The South Sudan **#PeaceHackCamp** is an inter-communal peace-building project aimed at media literacy training and networking with people from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, literacy levels, including those with informal education, self-taught skills and people displaced by conflict.

Initiated by a group of dedicated South Sudanese students, IT and media professionals, **#PeaceHackCamp** addressed how to make and share media, not just consume it, while introducing and creating public awareness on the benefits Open ICTs, Innovation and Open Educational Resources (OERs) as vehicles for peacebuilding, development and national reconciliation.

As a year-long program that included IT and video production training, **#PeaceHackCamp** concluded with South Sudan’s first international yet community developed technology, social activism and peacebuilding event, launching a series of events that have since taken place in Colombia and Egypt. This was a unique opportunity for people in South Sudan to network with peer innovation communities from other African innovation labs, experience hands-on knowledge sharing and have the chance to exchange good practices from local peacebuilding initiatives.

Bringing together peacebuilders, tech innovators and open culture advocates from across South Sudan and beyond to hack, code, make and collaborate for peace!

#ASKnet = Access to Skills and Knowledge Network

#ASKnet provides access to skills and knowledge to empower youth, address community challenges and transform cultural patterns.

#ASKnet (Access to Skills and Knowledge Network) is a capacity building and hub development program linking six community based youth-led innovation hubs in South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. The #ASKnet community aims to build a sustainable network of trainers and empowered individuals, to address specific challenges their communities are facing and transform cultural patterns that fuel conflict and inequality. It does so by providing youth access to skills and knowledge through Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops in themes including open source hardware and software using the #ASKotec, entrepreneurship, media production, gender equality awareness, trauma healing and financial literacy.

The program started in 2015 with the implementation of a community-based media training centre, the Juba Open Knowledge and Innovation Hub (**jHUB**), in South Sudan. With Juba under siege when the program was to begin in 2016, the jHUB community members scattered in numerous locations, with some of the group becoming refugees in northern Uganda and other regions in South Sudan. The program has since evolved into a mesh network of small nodes and local initiatives, becoming #ASKnet, the Access to Skills and Knowledge Network.

https://openculture.agency/asknet_-_access-to-skills-and-knowledge-network/

Power of One! The Story of #South Sudan And The #Hyracbox

The story of #Hyracbox in South Sudan has a very simple genesis, with one of our partners #Askotec ensuring that our box was part of the kit, what unfolds later is a beautiful story, one that tells tales of #ThePowerOfOne, one that speaks for a community in need of resources. A story about the benefits that the box can provide, but more so, a story about #People, #Access.

South Sudan and the Hyrac Box

<https://medium.com/@hyractech/power-of-one-the-story-of-south-sudan-and-the-hyracbox-39978c6c3374>

Hyrac Box

<https://www.hyracbox.com/>



MAKERSPACES ROLE IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

By Marthe Francine Nkolo Ateba

The Maker movement reflects the trend of Do It Yourself (DIY), where individuals or communities are tinkering and doing digital manufacturing. With varied applications in everyday life, research and industry, this movement is taking place in physical environments called makerspaces; a generic term for technological spaces where open innovation emerges. It includes FabLabs, Hubs, accelerators, incubators, Hackerspaces, Biohackerspaces, Living Labs, Coworking space, etc.

Makerspaces are generally equipped with digital machines (3D printers, laser cutters, etc.), computers, electronics kits as well as sewing machines, etc. Beyond this physical dimension, makerspaces are characterized by their community dimension; making them spaces where people with common interests (regardless of a given field) can meet, socialize, collaborate or discuss common themes and problems. The maker movement appears as a pillar of citizen science which is defined as: "the involvement of the public in scientific research - whether community-driven research or global investigations". It is no secret that the Maker movement has great potential for Africa. In terms of education, Makerspaces would improve the quality of education (Okpala 2016). On the economic front, Friederici (2016) argues that makerspaces have become a widespread form of support for technological entrepreneurship in Africa. On

the socio-political level, Ron Eglash and Ellen Foster (2017) argue that the maker movement offers anchors for Africa to build a sustainable and more egalitarian future. Ekekwe (2015) believes that the maker movement can play an important role in empowering African citizens.

In light of the above, it is clear that the makers' movement set the ground for more open societies, by including open citizen participation in policy-making. The maker's movement can be considered as a tool in the hands of policy-makers because it can promote an interactive communication between citizens and their authorities. In that sense, it ensures that greater account is taken of the needs and skills of the populations.

From there, my question is: what roles can the maker movement play in the current context of Cameroon? Where the Anglophone crisis is going on since October 2016.

Indeed, according to United Nations estimations, more than 437 000 people are currently displaced in Cameroon. More than 1800 persons have been killed in English-speaking regions of North-west and South-west Cameroon, and this number continues to increase. Due to this unsecured situation, many of the internally deported persons (IDPs) have taken refuge in big cities like Yaoundé, Douala and Bafoussam. How can the makerspaces operate as tools for peace building in Cameroon? To answer this question, I will study the MboaLab in Cameroon.



Credit: Felix Fokoua

CASE STUDY: MboaLab as a peacebuilder center in Cameroon

Peacebuilder Maker Space Design Sprint

Mboalab 27th-28th December 2019

The global objective of the Peacebuilder Maker Space Design Sprint is to empower citizens by creating strategies to directly tackle hate speech as a means of building trust among citizens and conflicting partners in Cameroon. The specific aim is to develop community based resource centres and tools on how a Peacebuilder Maker Space could look and function.

MboaLab is a community laboratory for social innovation, community-based education, collaboration and mediation. Located in Yaoundé, Cameroon, MboaLab is aligned with the same idea of FabLabs, which are places where spaces, machines, skills and knowledge can be freely shared to meet the needs of the community. Specifically, the MboaLab is working to:

- train communities in responsible use of social media to promote peace and identify disinformation and rumours;

- to bring people together, give them opportunities to share experiences and build their own future through open technologies;
- strengthen the concept of “vivre ensemble” “living-together” through Doing It Together (DIT).
- Since September 2019, MboaLab is recognized as a peacebuilder center; aiming to consolidate relationship between IDPs (from the Anglophone region) and Francophone Cameroonians, through activities related to DIY and making.
- How does the Mboalab dynamic of co-creation between IDPs and local communities contribute to peacebuilding in Cameroon?
- We are conducting a 6-month exploratory study as part of a project funded by the German Foreign Office. The methodology to be used will adopt a grounded theory approach (Strauss and al.1998).
- Data collection will be done through:
 - observation of activities taking place at MboaLab;
 - interviews and focus groups with IDPs attending activities at MboaLab;
 - storytelling.

The interviews and focus groups will be recorded; photos and videos will be taken. To care about ethics and privacy of attendees, all data collected will be anonymized before our qualitative analysis. The key expected outcomes are :

- document a framework for a workshop in making for peacebuilding;
- describe citizen science mechanisms leading to peacebuilding
- gather and handle data on IDPs skills and needs. So that they can be used by policymakers to know what their real needs are, and try to meet them.

During the ECSA2020 conference, I will present results of this research. We are confident that makerspaces like MboaLab can be considered a tool in the hands of policymakers, communities, and IDPs to create safe environments and best practices to promote a sustainable peace in Cameroon and Africa. Since a peaceful environment is a prerequisite for a prosperous nation and respect of human rights, this research fits with the sustainable development goals to achieve a better future for all.

Participants are members of associations: MboaLab, Jongo Hub, Association Baho, ICPH2SD. The participants came all over the country, even from North and South West regions: Michel Polly, based in Limbe (South West region), Mrs Makoudem, an expert in peace-building who works for "initiatives of change international," Félix Fokoua a young design artist of the West region, and all the MboaLab team.

Key words: **Peace building – Makerspaces – DIY – IDPs**



Irène EKOUTA, designer from association "Le pagne en Folie," based in Yaoundé. Coordinating the session on how best to attain the PeaceMaker Lab objectives. [Left Photo]

Thomas Mboa presents Mboalab and activities for training skills in the community. [Right Photo]

Credit: Stéphane FADANKA



NATIONAL HACKATHON SERIES

Vilsquare, Abuja

<https://vilsquare.org/makershub/>

The National Hackathon Series to bridge boundaries across Nigerian communities. Technology | Peace Advocacy | Civic Engagement

In the last few decades, Nigeria has been plagued by several socio-cultural problems. These problems have not only taken a toll on her economy, but have managed to continuously strike at the very core of the Nation. From the incessant communal clashes in the south-west and middle belt; the issues with piracy and pipeline vandalism from the Niger-Delta Militants in the south-south; Boko Haram sponsored terrorism and insurgency in the north; the recent clamour for the actualisation of a Biafran Republic in the South-East; and, previously unimagined but fatal clashes between herdsmen and farmers across the country, the previously unified front that is Nigeria appears to be under immense pressure. Based on these challenging scenarios, Vilsquare Makers' Hub in partnership with The Meluibe Empowerment Foundation has designed a Hackathon series aimed at contributing to creating an enabler platform for national cohesion and integration. The series themed "Building the Makers' Movement" brings together diverse community members to conceptualize, design, process and document technical solutions to local problems. The hackathons take place over a period of two years, beginning with each of the geo-political zones in Nigeria hosting the programme.

How Nigerian Youth are building a more inclusive society via Civic Technology

Targeting data science and civic technology across Africa, Vilsquare has deployed mobile tech hubs in conflict and non-conflict areas (all geopolitical zones) in Nigeria.

At each of these mobile hubs, the team assembles diverse young (ages 18–30 years) humanitarian makers to build Open Source technology solutions that solve their community problems while enforcing national dialogue and social inclusion.

The Vilsquare team foresees the applicability of National Hackathon Series in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa where the methodology of the Hackathon can be transposed with the same or more impactful results. As an example, Cameroon is a country presenting many of the same features as Nigeria, and even more diverse.

Cameroon, a country with a big challenge of diversity and inclusion

Located in Central Africa, Cameroon is one of the countries in the world with the highest cultural diversity: linguistic diversity (242 languages, each grouping several dialects still), ethnic diversity (about 40 ethnic groups subdivided into several subgroups each, distributed in the 3 main troupes of the Global North, the Global South and the Global West), religious diversity (laic state, the country shelters Christians of all faiths, Muslims, Animists, other obediences and free-thinkers).

Despite this linguistic fullness, the only national and official languages are French and English inherited from the double colonization by England and France. Despite the reunification of 2 Cameroon in 1972, the rough bilingualism gradually became the subject of many complaints from the English-speaking minority (North-West and South-West) to the French-speaking part (the 8 other regions).

Combined with the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities that already set communities apart from each other, the demands of the English-speaking part have resurfaced in 2017, stronger with the demand for federalism or independence of the English-speaking regions, namely North-West and South-West. These demands rejected by the government have led to separatist movements and demonstrations that the government repressed by the deployment of the army throughout the English-speaking part: resulting in fierce clashes and conflict, causing the massive displacement of populations to neighbouring countries and cities.

Inspiring Cameroonian youth through national hackathons

Launching a “National Hackathon Series” in Cameroon rises as one solution to overcome digital rights violation and tribalism. The country recorded an internet shutdown of 230 days between January 2017 and March 2018, longest of those blocks having lasted 93 days: stoking regional unrest, brewing frustrations, and crippling a vibrant digital sector in Buea, known as “Silicon Mountain”. Internet shutdowns persisted in the pre-election period, with the spread of disinformation, and the wave of hate speech from one tribe to another.

With National Hackathon Series, citizens can create solutions to protect their digital rights and build an inclusive society to live in. Considering the results attained in Nigeria, such civic technology initiatives can help in solving real societal issues.

Getting Cameroonian stakeholders on board

Vilsquare relies on the global context data and citizens of a given community to identify their own problems, needs and bring them to bear concrete solutions through the Hackathon. Young people between the ages of 18 and 35 are targeted to be carriers of change through technology. The Hackathon is an opportunity for them, as technology lovers, to create solutions to everyday’s hitches in their respective communities. The chosen theme is driven by the major outbreaks identified in a country or a community, and relates to one or more of the SDG’s targets.

Launching hackathons everywhere in Africa

Hackathons are above all places of intercultural, interethnic, inter-linguistic meetings and exchanges. They therefore contribute to the discovery and understanding of each other. Working with each other on the same project leads to learning and to coming out with a better conception of the tribe, the ethnic group or the whole linguistic community that they represent.

Willing to support or join the movement, get in touch with the Vilsquare team!

<https://medium.com/@vilsquareglobalresources/this-is-how-nigerian-youth-is-building-a-more-inclusive-society-via-civic-technology-1c4efeb0ed53>



CASE STUDY: KIRO’O GAMES CAMEROON

A talk with Olivier Madiba of Kiro’o Games, who built the Aurion games series.

By Kendi Gikunda



<http://kiroogames.com/>

How has Kiro'o Games helped reshape the minds of young people with local narratives?

We have done it on two accounts: We included the content of the games which includes a narrative of the quest of whom you are as a person. In the Aurion games you gain strength from building yourself and your purpose in life.

We are creating a new game "the public service game" where the player is a leader in Africa and in this case it's specific to a politician. It was inspired by the corrupt practices in Cameroon. In the game you build social services for your people and that's how you proceed to the next level. We aim to create disgust of corruption, this helps people think about how your behavior and actions impact on you and your society.

We have also included a portion of the games that makes you believe in yourself with the skill set you possess.



We need to learn more about our history the things we can do with what we have. **We have a chance to innovate and create something accommodating to Africa:**

- Can we go past Capitalism?
- Is there a way we can create an income within our communities without taking advantage of our people?
- Can we go past our different languages especially in Cameroon as an English and French speaking country?
- How do you change the world if you are the weakest?
- How do you create change even if you have the least amount of wealth?
- How do you define your path and choose your allies while still remaining diplomatic?

How best can Kiro'o Games be used to preach peace and solidarity?

They give young people who are idle busy from engaging in hate speech online as they would rather play these games than go out wandering which could lead to misconduct and delinquency which is one of the bases of the crisis. We are also building a platform that will help people raise funds and support themselves. We have tried to maintain an open dialogue starting from our office. We have Francophone and Anglophone speakers working with us. All our games and comic books are bilingual that includes our website.

I wish we had more money to translate everything we create but sometimes we have very little funds that we hold games longer before we release them as they are in just one language. We are a startup so we get cash strapped on occasion but we try to give back through talks and open days. It's very capital intensive so we take on young people as interns for like a week and we always hope that inspires them in their journeys.

Does Kiro'o Games cut across communities or are the games reserved for a particular group?

They cut across communities but it depends on who gets on the platforms to pay them. I can mostly speak on the people we hire as we have control of that. We are funded by Cameroonians who invest in our organisation, and that way we can keep afloat.

What is the engagement rate of users/players and how popular are Kiro'o Games?

Aurion is popular in and out of Cameroon. We want to reach more people in Cameroon through smartphone games, PC games are not as popular in Cameroon.

Where are you based and how easy is it to access you? Online, Offline?

All our games are available on the Aurion website. We are making the smartphone version of the politician game. It is the most awaited game in Cameroon. We are working on a game on play store.

<http://aurionthegame.com/>

What are the challenges you have faced and how have you weathered them?

We have had talk of games make kids lazy but it is not the case. We have been trying to share the positives with the parents by involving them. We struggle with funding so as we still do not make a profit from our games yet. We get a lot of publicity through the Ministry of Telecommunications and local Cameroonian investors.

Is there anything you would do differently?

For the start and how much we struggled not really, we were broke and naïve. All the naivete we had then helped us take risks we cannot be able to do now. There is more at stake now, we have to take more calculated steps. When we started as a leader we should have done more, to empower our people. We should have been more prepared business wise and cash wise. We had very little money that ran out very fast and people were not motivated and we almost gave up just before we launched. We lacked the drive to be excellent because of lack of money, I think we could have prepared ourselves better mentally.

The illusion that we would become millionaires after the release of the first game!

Motivation comes from anywhere, and when we share stuff on online it shows the world our work. I have received direct messages just when I was about to give up, from young people telling me how the game motivates them. PC games and Smartphone games are more than just hitting keys on your machine. You learn and teach people while at it.

We pride ourselves in the fact that we are building a community more focused on people and our culture. We aim to build the most interesting games, cartoons and comic books in Africa.





Credit: Georges Pondy & Felix Fokoua

Aurion: Legacy of the Kori-Odan

Aurion: Legacy of the Kori-Odan is a 2D African Fantasy Action-RPG which seeks to innovate in this genre. The dynamic gameplay partly inspired by the old school “Tales of” series, focuses on 2D real-time combat sequences while the narration and its environment both draw deeply from African culture, myths and lores.

Who am I ? What is my place in this world ?

There comes a time when everyone asks himself these questions. On Aurioma, an energy called Aurion reacts only to those who seek answers, connecting them to their ancestors.

In the city of Zama, the king and queen, Enzo and Erine Kori-Odan, are crowned on their wedding day. But this happy day will be the beginning of their struggles, their trials and their journey to find the true meaning of the Kori-Odan Heritage.

How do you play Aurion?

In the game, you will take the role of Enzo Kori-Odan, the Prince of Zama who suffers a coup d'état from his brother in-law on the day of his coronation and marriage with Erine Evou. Through thrilling execution, combo-heavy action sequences, Erine and Enzo will redefine their bond, rescue the land from its villains, and restore their legacy. Luckily, Enzo can call on the Aurion, a powerful collective energy channelled from ancestors that can unlock devastating fighting abilities and combos to help him beat his foes.

The comic book takes the story of the video game, for a non-gamer audience or gamers who want to discover more in depth, the adventure of King Enzo and Queen Erine.

Aurion's Story: The Kori-Odan Legacy is based on the African Fantasy role-playing game. The first Cameroonian video game has been praised by international critics for its captivating and inspiring screenplay.

**“A Video Game That Transports Players to A Different Kind of Africa”
EVAN NARCISSE, KOTAKU**

**“Aurion: Legacy of the Kori-Odan has deep, intricate combat for a game whose
story focuses on togetherness and community.”
JOEL COUTURE, INDIEGAMES**

**“It's billed as an “African-fantasy Action RPG”, putting a lot of emphasis on combos
and combat while also having a setting based on African mythology.”
JOE PARLOCK, DESTRUCTOID**

CONTACTS & SOCIAL**aurionthegame.com****contact@kiroogames.com**twitter: **@Aurionthegame**fb: **AurionheritageDesKoriodan**youtube: **Kirootales**Instagram: **Aurion_lko****PEACETECH EXAMPLES****Citizen Evidence Lab, Amnesty International****<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/12/amnesty-international-updates-citizen-evidence-lab-for-cutting-edge-open-source-human-rights-investigations/>**

Citizen evidence” includes images, videos, satellite imagery, large data sets and other material showing a potential human rights violation that has been collected by someone other than an official human rights investigator.

Frequently shared publicly through social media networks like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, this sort of documentation often exposes in great detail crimes that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Although access and technology for gathering citizen evidence are constantly improving, there is also more disinformation that requires multiple data sources or tools to debunk.

i4policy**<http://i4policy.org/>**

Shape Inclusive African Innovation Policies

Join us as we co-create the next African Innovation Policy Manifesto. i4Policy builds tools, methodologies and training to support open source technology development in public policy consultation and co-creation.

Internews**<https://internews.org/>**

Internews is an international nonprofit organization that empowers people worldwide with the trustworthy, high-quality news and information they need to make informed decisions, participate in their communities, and hold power to account. Internews’ work counters disinformation on multiple fronts to make sure that people get the accurate information they need to make good decisions. Internews has supported the development of thousands of media outlets worldwide, including radio and television stations, newspapers, mobile news networks, and online news sites, together with local partners.

THE SENTINEL PROJECT: HATEBASE**<https://thesentinelproject.org/projects>**

Hatebase is the world’s largest online repository of structured multilingual, usage-based hate speech. It is an attempt to create a repository of words and phrases that researchers can use to detect the early stages of genocide and remains in active development.

Hatebase offers two main features: a Wikipedia-like interface which allows users to classify and record location-specific “sightings”, and an authenticating API that allows developers to mesh Hatebase data with other tools for genocide prevention.

PeaceTech Lab<http://www.peacetechlab.org>

PeaceTech Lab works to reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data to accelerate and scale peacebuilding efforts. PeaceTech Lab East Africa has developed tools to limit media incitement to violence as well as to monitor and counter hate speech also in collaboration with #defyhatenow, including reports and the PeaceTech Lab Social Media and Conflict in South Sudan, a Lexicon of Hate Speech Terms.

Waayama Early Warning Software<http://www.earlywarningnigeria.org/>

Waayama Early Warning Software (Nigeria) provides local communities with a cloud-based early warning platform to systematically collect, analyze and communicate quantitative and qualitative information on current or impending threats to human security. Waayama is intended for micro-level or community-based early warning, with the goal to foster successful early response to prevent violence.



WIKIPEDIA FOR PEACE

#defyhatenow initiative trained students from the University of Juba on writing and editing information about South Sudan on Wikipedia online global encyclopedia, November 2017.



Credit: Wikipedia for Peace, University of Juba, South Sudan, 2017

Objectives:

- Empowering South Sudanese to have a global voice in national narratives and knowledge in the quest for lasting peace.
- Generating more knowledge about other people-to-people peacebuilding issues.
- Initiate a sustainable movement of South Sudanese Wikipedia writers/editors.

Why Wikipedia?

South Sudan is underrepresented at Wikipedia, the world's largest online encyclopedia. There are hardly 1,500 articles about South Sudanese subjects and most of them are just stubs, since even entries about many major towns and states only feature a couple of lines. While Wikipedia is one of the most used and

visited websites, almost no content about South Sudan has been generated inside the country itself. Instead, most information about South Sudan has been created by outsiders.

#defyhatenow worked with the student run #kefkum initiative to collaboratively edit, starting with a critical review of Wunlit Peace conference to create a comprehensive article on Wikipedia.

Wunlit Peace Conference

As an example from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wunlit_Peace_Conference