TECHNOLOGY - communication

The aim of this project is to enable the children in the UK -
To understand the impact of new technologies on a developing country.
To compare and contrast the access to resources.

Technology
Mobile telephones
Computers
Access to internet
Information for medicine
Communication
Benefits

The role of technology cannot be over estimated in transforming the lives of people in developing countries. Communication enables ideas, information, skills and knowledge to be shared. This flow of information will have a profound effect on improving the quality of lives and in some instances can save lives. For example, the transfer of medical knowledge by computers and the internet can provide up to date information on medical matters. Communication between continents, countries, towns and villages crosses the cultural divide and brings people together to learn from each other to create a better environment for our children to thrive. Technology makes the world a more accessible place and opens up opportunities for experiences to be shared. It motivates and galvanizes people into action, it provides a window on how other people live and experience the world. Technology provides the opportunity for developing countries to move forward, to engage with others and improve the living condition of their indigenous population.

In Uganda there are few people with access to the new technologies, mobile telephones, computers, access to the internet are still a scarce commodity. However, these new technologies are starting to have an impact on lives and in time their presence will, hopefully, filter down to the general population and improve the lives of all.

Mobile telephones -   with comments from our friends in Uganda

A transformative technology which has revolutionized the way people in Uganda communicate. It has helped people to build up their business and link in with the global world. "There is however, an uneven spread and a great difference in the availability of mobile telephones in Uganda. This is dependent whether it is a rural or urban setting. In urban areas, most of the people have mobile telephones but it is difficult to charge them as not all homes have electricity. To charge the telephone one has to pay a fee at a phone charging stall in the trading centre which is expensive and lack of disposable income can make this prohibitive. However, the mobile telephone is having an impact and has put people in touch with one another and has enabled some business to thrive". (Landline telephones are rare in Uganda and most of the mobile telephones are Pay as You Go).

"In Uganda today a local tradesperson has greatly benefited from the use of mobile 'phones in that goods can be ordered from a wholesaler using a mobile phone. In the same way, buyers call different shops to find out whether a certain product is available. One buyer directs another where to find a product by the help of these phones. At the end of it all one saves time and money that would be spent traveling by getting the necessary information using the mobile phone".

Computers and the internet

Computers are becoming more common in Uganda and there are internet cafes available in the towns. "Many offices and academic institutions provide internet for their clients and students respectively. A small percentage of high and middle class Ugandans have acquired modems for large packages for internet access. A few can access internet on their mobile telephones. Computers are mostly available in the urban areas especially in offices and schools- only few households have computers for home use. However, it is only urban schools or rural private schools that have the opportunity to learn how to use computers since they are not

available in most primary schools. Besides, rural schools lack electricity. So they cannot use computers. Many children have never seen a computer and many teachers have never touched a computer. This is a challenge for the changing world".

Technology in Medicine

"In medicine, technology has been very helpful in diagnosis like HIV and malaria and some forms of management like cancer radiotherapy. There is however the challenge of electricity to power these machines (in rural areas) and when the very advanced ones break down, there are no technicians to repair them; maintenance costs are high.

An encounter in a hospital in western Uganda.

Visiting a hospital I was told no one could have an Xray because the Xray machine had been broken for several months and there was no replacement part available. The machine could not be repaired and those needing an Xray could not have one.

Whilst knowledge and technology are available– the shortage of funding mean the reality is a lack of resources available.

The charity HUGS has supplied St. Zoe's with a few computers to enable the children to learn computer skills and connect with the wider world. This means the children can benefit from the knowledge on the web. (solar panels are providing electricity).

New technologies can influence a reduction in poverty and improve the life chances of the children and raise their standard of living.

New technologies can save lives. An example of this:
The charity is trying to provide insecticide treated Mosquito Nets for all the children and villagers. The web has made it easy to connect with academics and doctors who have provided knowledge and advice on where to access teaching material. Also, information has been given about training that can be provided in Uganda. This level of communication would not have been possible without the world wide web. All this infornmation will go to our schools in Uganda and help to protect the children and the villagers.

Technology and a way forward

Gulu University and a link to ManchesterHelping the success of Gulu University is the Partnership with the University Hospital of South Manchester. This hospital has twinned with Gulu and many doctors, nurses and other staff have either volunteered or taken career breaks to go and live in Gulu and teach a wider variety of subjects. It is a great example of how the uK can help others around the world and at the same time bring back invaluable experience.

Gulu University Hospital
Linking into South Manchester Hospital