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**PEOPLE AND PLACES VOLUNTEER REPORT  
GAMBIA NO WOMAN LEFT BEHIND IT SUPPORT PROJECT  
SPRING 2023  
MICHAEL GORMAN**

**Reasons for volunteering**

This project followed on from my first People and Places project which took place between March and June 2022. In that project I had worked with tutors and teachers at ITTOG and Mary's Little Lamb nursery to provide training on the use of IT in teaching. This covered PowerPoint, Word, Excel and a variety of other useful tools such as video making and Padlet. I've always been interested in supporting education in developing countries and I have travelled extensively, including an education visit to The Gambia for teachers.

This 2023 project supported two teachers Bakary and Fatou who were working with a group of women in the No Woman Left Behind project in Banjul. In this, a group of around two dozen women who had experienced significant disadvantage were signed up to undertake a business studies course to enable them to find employment especially in the local tourist industry.

(Note from *people and places*: While the tourist industry is perhaps the greatest opportunity to generate income, ITTOG is very aware that economic resilience often depends on the women also generating an income from the local economy).

One part of the course was developing their IT skills. My role was to mentor Bakary and Fatou in planning and teaching IT to learners whose skills could be quite limited.

**Placement dates and project**

The project took place over a 12 week period between February 24 and June 2 2023.

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The online sessions usually lasted about half an hour and took place every Friday from 11.00.00 BST. Each session focused on lesson planning – We discussed how the previous lesson had gone and then what to cover next. In the early stages we discussed effective lesson planning and I helped them redesign the lesson planning sheet that they were using so that it helped them to plan a sequence of activities more effectively.



The teachers were able to make use of the resources that I had produced for the previous year's course. This included a series of short videos and activity booklets covering basic IT skills such as Word and Excel. Bakary had downloaded these last year but I also made them available through a shared Google Drive. Previously they had been stored on an open access learning platform called Edmodo but this was closed down by the developers later on in 2022.

### **Pre-placement preparation**

Having worked on a similar project in 2022 the preparation was straightforward. Dianne and Adama were helpful in clarifying the objectives for the programme and Sallie and Dianne worked closely with ITTOG to ensure that the whole Business Studies course was clearly set out and within a manageable timeframe. I also discussed with Bakary and Fatou what they wished to cover and I asked them throughout the course were there any other ways I could help them.

Sallie paid a visit to the project later on in the course and was able to observe the lessons and provide me with useful feedback. She reassured me that the mentoring was proving to be useful.

### **My experience and work**

Bakary and Fatou were enthusiastic participants throughout the mentoring programme and had clearly established a good rapport and working relationship with the learners in the group. The learners were able to use their mobile phones and ITTOG had 10 laptops that they were able to use. Bakary and Fatou organised sub-groups so that everyone had good access to the computers.



good.

There were some practical challenges to deal with. Several of the group already had good IT skills, some considerably less so later Bakary and Fatou divided them into two groups based on ability. The broadband connection was intermittent so we used WhatsApp instead. However, when the broadband was working the connexion was very

### **Successes, disappointments and challenges of your placement**

We covered all the content that we planned together and Bakary and Fatou said that they found the mentoring sessions really useful. That said it was clear to me that they already had good IT skills and their feedback suggested that the learners were making good progress.

**What was the highlight of your volunteer experience?**

As with the previous project, working with such a wonderful group of friendly and enthusiastic people was a real joy. Knowing that this was having a positive impact on a group of vulnerable women was also especially gratifying.

**Advice for future volunteers****What advice would you give to future e-volunteers, including any technical difficulties you encountered?**

It's important to find out from the people you are going to work with exactly what it is they would like to get out of the e-volunteer placement. This is worth doing several weeks if not months before the volunteer placement begins so that you can plan your work to best meets their needs.

Try to iron out any technical difficulties early on, ideally just with one person at the other end with technical expertise. Encountering technical difficulties once the sessions are underway can undermine confidence from the group. Use a wide range of technical solutions and don't be afraid to try things you've not used yourself before.

**Would you recommend e-volunteering to other people or not? Please tell us why**

Absolutely yes. I found it deeply rewarding and enriching. I was able to share some of my skills but for me I learned a great deal about education in the Gambia and it was gratifying to receive such positive feedback and to know that it is having a positive impact on their work.

Thank you again to People and Places for providing me with this wonderful and enriching opportunity. And thanks to Sallie for the pictures!

Michael Gorman July 2023

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