

## IT CUP Madagascar Center : Internet for all

In February 2019, three tycoons of the Industry, Elon Musk (Tesla or SpaceX) , Jeff Bezos (Amazon) and Richard Branson (Virgin) brought a significant support to the OneWeb project, aiming to create a true constellation to connect the world to the Internet with the scheduled launch of nearly 900 satellites by 2025.

Crazy dream of billionaire megalos, or promise of an Internet for all at lowest cost wherever you are on the planet? Too early to say, history will tell. Bill Gates had a vision of one computer per person, and we all know what happened with laptops and tablets. We could bet that once again innovation & significant investment would turn the dream into reality.

While waiting for better days for the forgotten ones of the digital revolution, some NGO's are working on a daily basis to make this future fantasy an immediate reality. This is the case of Telecom Sans Frontières , international NGO, specialized in emergency situation and



crisis management, present for 20 years on all the hot spots in the world, and the Parisian association IT Cup, fundraising through an annual football tournament at Clairefontaines to help the development of digital in the world's poorest countries.

In 2007, a first center was opened in Niger for NGOs and local populations. Five more centers have since followed in Nicaragua, Burma, Burkina Faso and Madagascar.

The common denominator of all these countries? The extreme poverty of the populations, and a total lack of infrastructure, condemning millions of people to live in precarious

conditions, with no perspective of progress and no access to the knowledge offered by the new technologies.

These IT CUP centers were the precursors of what could enable in the near future OneWeb .

## **IT CUP center to do what ?**

In the ITCUP center of Miarinarivo , village located 3 hours from the Malagasy capital , nearly 700 young people come every month, to surf the Internet, to learn while having fun or enjoy Youtube videos . Like a Parisian or chinese teenager since the digital revolution is now global. The only difference is that a young Malagasy has no other



solution than the IT CUP center to connect to the digital world.

Of course local operators such as Orange and Telma are working to develop 4G, but connections are still too expensive in a country where 80% of the population is below the \$1.25 / day poverty line, and where the Internet penetration is less than 4%,

according to the latest UNICEF statistics.

The center, opened in 2012, has steadily improved offering more activities for children such as school support for primary schools, college and high schools, or programme training tools like Excel for students or farmers. Technical clubs have also emerged, such as programming for children with Scratch language, or a training to the open source software OpenStreetMap to develop local community, in order to build a global geographic database. Training will be provided to digitalize main points of interest in the region via GPS receivers and enrich the first digital map of Madagascar .

Even if they are looking towards the future, the management of Telecom Sans Frontières, which manages this center, continue to offer more traditional activities like Malagasy fairy tales with video support, or board games with learning via tablets.



One of the key success factors of this ITCUP center was the hiring of young Madagascans like Irinah the person in charge of the center, a 28 year old dynamic young woman always taking initiatives. Irinah speaks, not only Malagasy and French, but also the language of HTML or Wordpress. Her presence reassures the children but also helps to inspire the hundreds of girls who attend the center to shows that local competences exist and can be acquired locally. The future belongs to the next generation of irinah and the center is hoping that thousands of other Irinah will follow and open new horizons to a country where more than half of the population is under 20 years, before the project OneWeb connects Madagascar to the worldwide net.



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\* The IT CUP is an association under the 1901 law, which raises funds to fight against exclusion and poverty in the world through the development of new technologies.