

# EduTech Refuge

Ingram Scholars Summer Project - Aryan Garg

<https://www.edutechrefuge.com>

## Kakuma, Kenya



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## Background - What is Kakuma?

Kakuma is a refugee camp located in the Turkana District of Northern Kenya, approximately 120 kilometers (70 miles) north of Lodwar Airport. It serves refugees from across Africa, including primarily those from Sudan, but also many from Somalia, Ethiopia, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Acting almost like a mini-city, Kakuma is home to 150,000 refugees, making it one of the seven largest refugee camps in the world. The camp is divided into four parts: Kakuma 1, 2, 3, and 4.

## Organization Information - Peace for Development Refugees Initiative

This grassroots organization operates in Kakuma 1, Zone 3, Block 8. Founded in 2016 by fellow refugees, PDRI aims to support their community by promoting peace and social cohesion. Given Kakuma's diverse population, efforts toward social cohesion and refugee support are crucial. PDRI primarily focuses on assisting women and young refugees, who are among the most vulnerable. They have initiated several programs, including an Education for Children program (ECD) for kids aged 3 to 11 years, a sports activity program for children under 15, and a women's empowerment program. Currently, they are developing an ICT computer literacy program.

## The Main Problem

Since its inception in 2019, the ICT program has successfully trained over 300 students in computer usage. However, the program is at capacity, and training opportunities are severely limited due to only having **three computers** for **over 500 students**. In today's digital world, computer literacy is essential for accessing information and job opportunities. PDRI's capacity constraints and the lack of personal practice opportunities lead to students forgetting much of what they learn. While PDRI has successful programs in various trades, its computer program is lagging due to these limitations. Furthermore, most ICT classes in Kakuma are limited by outdated technology (Ex. Microsoft Excel) and fail to teach the students anything useful that they can apply to their everyday lives.

# Project Statement

The core of the project was to establish a computer lab for the Kakuma region and create an online training system for its residents. My budget has been spent to construct a computer lab with laptops, projectors, and proper facilities for students to be able to access the internet. The computer lab has been built to allow for four types of learning sections: 1) Teaching students basics of computers, 2) Teaching students intermediate skills (ex. Website Building, AI Use), 3) Time for High School students to access online resources such as Khan Academy and Coursera, and 4) Free time for graduated students to come back and practice their skills and work on their projects. Throughout my time in Kakuma, I have helped to build and teach an intermediate curriculum for students to follow and taught refugees how they can access the wealth of learning resources that exists on the internet.

## Timeline

**Week 1:** During this week, the focus was on acclimating to the environment of the refugee camp. I focused on meeting with previous volunteers, coordinators, and refugees to foster a sense of community and collaboration with them.

**Week 2:** This week we started the construction of the Computer Lab and started to procure the necessary equipment, such as computers, printers, projectors, etc. During this week we interviewed the students to be selected for our intermediate ICT Class.

**Week 3:** This is when we start to introduce the lab to the refugees, and create some pre-assessments to understand the level of knowledge that my students are at to start developing the bulk of the curriculum.

**Week 4-7:** The focus shifts entirely to teaching the ICT class and refining the curriculum based on what I find applicable. I tried to figure out what works best with the students as well as what are the limitations that we are starting to reach. Our curriculum ended up teaching refugees about: AI, Online Learning, Typing, Graphic Design, Photography, Video Editing, Podcasting, Website Building, and Basic Coding.

**Week 8:** During the final week of the project, we started to wrap up all of our learning. The student's final project was to create a website about a local business or organization in their community. During the last day, we held a graduation party for them and gave them PDRI-stamped certificates (For many of whom, this was their first ever graduation party!) During this week, we also selected the 4 best students to take over the ICT lab after my departure, and started their training.

## Personal Statement and Connection

Last semester, I worked extensively with refugees primarily from Latin America and East Africa at TIRCC (Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition). I have been able to interact with people from South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and more. Last Thanksgiving Break, I also volunteered in Ukraine and saw first-hand how war affects people and society, and how crucial it is for proper rebuilding efforts to be in place for the refugees who got a chance to escape their war-torn hometowns. Growing up in the Bay Area, my lifelong engagement with computers has shown me how technology can empower individuals from diverse backgrounds to educate themselves and explore the world. Computers can act as the great equalizer in modern society.



## Sources:

“KAKUMA CAMP & KALOBYEI SETTLEMENT Visitors’ Guide.” UNHCR. Accessed February 18, 2024.

<https://www.unhcr.org/ke/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/02/UNHCR-Sub-Office-Kakuma-Visitors-Guide.pdf>.