

Story Book - Girls Who Code

DISRUPTING THE STATUS QUO

Innovations during COVID-19 by African Girls Who Code
African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI) Webinar

About AGCCI

The African Girls Can Code Initiative is a four year project that will bring together Girls from all over the African continent across different languages to spark their interest in ICT as a career path and to empower them as young promising innovative women on the Continent.

Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Coding Skills



Reotshepile Mmutle

South Africa



I've also thought of new ideas such as 'digital emergency helpers' as Gender Based Violence (GBV) has unfortunately increased in South Africa.

“My name is Reotshepile Mmutle from South Africa. I am in grade 12. COVID-19 has affected/influenced me in both positive and negative ways. It has encouraged me to be innovative as it has pushed me to my limits. I've found new ways of learning, communicating, and strengthening my networks. I've learned about new innovations that I can take part in; for example, digitizing manual tasks, which I excel in. I've also thought of new ideas such as 'digital emergency helpers' as Gender Based Violence (GBV) has unfortunately increased in South Africa.

In addition to innovations, I have spent my time upgrading my skills in other areas, such as improving my cooking and writing skills

(which I enjoy the most), however, I've been pushed to my limits too. I have to study more while learning most things by myself because of the impact of the novel corona virus. It's unfair on me and my fellow students, but in order to secure our futures, we must do what benefits us the most, even though it feels like we are sacrificing most of our time. Because of this I've been trying to find ways to improve our education system. I have also been struggling to understand why we are expected to comprehend a lot of things now that we missed over the 6 months (due to COVID-19) in a few months when we could have learnt them in the years before. COVID-19 pandemic has been eye opener yet stressful, but I hope to get the most out of it.”

Yordanos Genanaw

Ethiopia



“My name is Yordanos Genanaw, I'm 19 years old and currently a first-year student at Bahirdar University. During this unprecedented time, I have been trying to be as productive as I can

be by preparing for an exam which I will be taking right after the universities are opened. These exams are important for stream selection. On top of that, I am taking online coding courses,

while reading both academic and non-academic books. For instance, I am trying to improve on the coding skills I acquired during the AGCCI training camp for which I didn't

have time for before. Moreover, I am teaching my younger brother and my friends how to code on Scratch. I have also been trying to learn other programming languages

such as C++ and Java online. Furthermore, I have been making 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) face masks for my family, friends and for my neighbors, which I am trying to produce in large scale and distribute to local communities, especially for those who are unable to

afford one. I have also been helping my family by doing most of the chores at home. I have also been watching movies that I haven't had



I have been making 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) face masks for my family, friends and for my neighbors...

Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Coding Skills

time for before and spending time with my family while preparing for the opening of universities. By being engaged in these activities I feel very happy as I am sharing my coding knowledge as well as helping my family, friends and community by providing face masks.

“I would like UN partners and other stakeholders to prepare more webinars like the previous AGCCI

webinar series or on other online platforms in order to improve the coding skills acquired during the AGCCI training camp. For instance, online courses which will introduce us to other programming languages; and also invite ICT persons to share their knowledge and skills with us by organizing online lectures to improve our soft skills during this pandemic.”

“My name is Malerato Mphahlele from South Africa. I’m doing my final year of High School in 2020 and I must say that it has been complicated by this COVID-19 pandemic. Learning has become very hard during the lockdown in South Africa where most of the learners from rural areas faced connection problems where they were unable to take full time online classes. On the other hand, this period gave me an opportunity to develop my coding

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I helped a friend of mine in implementing her expo idea of an ‘alerting system’ that would flatten the exponential curve of GBV and human trafficking in South Africa

skills and assist others around me. I helped a friend of mine in implementing her expo idea of an ‘alerting system’ that would flatten the exponential curve of GBV and human trafficking in South Africa. The lockdown has helped me discover a lot of things that I didn’t realize around me and it has also given me an opportunity to review my environment and come up with practical solutions that will benefit my village.”

Malerato Mphahlele

South Africa



“Greetings to all, my name is Christelle Makambo, I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I already had my graduation date since last year but due to COVID-19, it had to be postponed. In my country it is not easy to find a job, especially during the pandemic, not only for me but for my country people since everything has been closed - schools, churches, private

companies among others. Students struggle with many things- no online schooling and no alternatives. One month after the Minister of Education announced the commencement of the televised courses, it was received with mixed reactions because in my country there is a problem with electricity. Few learners had the opportunity to take these televised courses.

Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Coding Skills

To pass time, I started meeting up with destitute children, and talking with young mothers, when an idea came to mind, to open a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that would allow young mothers and homeless children to have knowledge about certain jobs in aesthetics (beauty), computer science, art among many other sectors. I admit that it was not easy to open an NGO but I asked for help from my friends and luckily, everything worked as I had planned. After a few months, the lockdown was eased but we were observant of the social-distancing regulations. We always wore our masks yet other inhabitants of my country do not, as they don't believe in the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, I wait for the opening of my NGO. Thank you very much."



I admit that it was not easy to open an NGO but I asked for help from my friends and luckily, everything worked as I had planned.



Fatou Ndiaye

Senegal

"Hello all, my name is Fatou Ndiaye, I am Senegalese and currently in my second year of software engineering (web development). The period of COVID-19 was very difficult at the beginning as the courses at the university were stopped abruptly due to the increase of the virus, but we then resumed studies through the internet for online courses. However, even this solution was a little difficult due to connection problems sometimes. In the meantime, I have continued working on my project which is called (BaanaBaana 221) that could help many young people to make online sales and at the same time to continue their studies based on agriculture, also named (Natal, sn). It has been a difficult period during COVID-19 and there initially was some panic, but we later settled our minds/thoughts. We were a little disturbed, however, the ideas were awakened. During the COVID-19 many projects were developed even though they were not actualized. Thank you for having given us the opportunity to express ourselves during this period."



I have continued working on my project which is called (BaanaBaana 221) that could help many young people to make online sales and at the same time to continue their studies

Teaching, Health and Housekeeping Skills



**Runa Isameldeen
Ahmed**

Sudan



I started posting more on social media about how dangerous it was, and that people should seriously take precautions and not underestimate it.

“My name is Runa from Sudan and I recently graduated from school after a long year due to all the political issues that kept on affecting our school enrollment. My idea of 2020 was quite different, after all the activities that I had been planning, from staying home for what was supposed to be 2 weeks ended up being 5-6 months due to COVID-19. I wasn’t used to staying at home for long and it was just too boring, but I had to get accustomed to it for myself and my loved ones. When the COVID-19 cases increased in Sudan, I started posting more on social media about how dangerous it was, and that people should seriously take precautions and not underestimate it. It was kind of lonely in the beginning not being

in contact with people but during this time I tried to occupy my time with useful activities where I learned how to cook new recipes ,read books practice more coding and I also worked out at home to stay fit from all the food and sitting around. In addition, I’ve been helping my sister with her studies as well as looking into all the universities that I will be applying to, therefore, weighing my options carefully. The pandemic has taught me how to be patient and to take care of my surrounding.”



Arsema Esayas

Ethiopia

“My name is Arsema Esayas, I’m 19 years old from Ethiopia. I joined Bahir Dar University (BDU) in 2020 - the year that COVID-19 appeared in our world. In Ethiopia, due to this pandemic, we spent about 6 months locked in our home because schools were closed. During the 6 months, I engaged myself with some work which was related to health. I, therefore, managed to learn more about diseases



I learnt about the different causes and symptoms of the diseases listed above and how to control and prevent them through treatments.

such as Hypertension, Heart disease, Cancer, Diabetes, Nephritis and Kidney failure.” I learnt about the different causes and symptoms of the diseases listed above and

how to control and prevent them through treatments. I had also a wonderful time educating my families and neighbors on what to do in order to reduce chances of being affected by those diseases. I also engaged in some sports to keep my body fit and return my health to normal condition. Additionally, I learnt to do some house chores that I couldn’t do before. Finally, I kept my mind and heart positive through motivating myself to have courage to do these things and that one day everything will be fine for all of us where that day is not far.”

Teaching, Entrepreneurship and Housekeeping Skills



Ruth Mulu

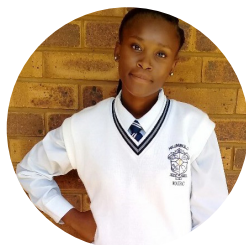
Ethiopia



The first thing I did was to help my brother with his studies (science), a little bit of programming and help him build his social skills so that he could have a little bit of everything by the time we resumed normalcy.

“My name is Ruth Mulu, I’m 19 years old and a first year Medical student at Mekelle University. COVID-19 has hit everyone in a way that we had never imagined. We used to spend most of our time in schools/ universities and there was always something to engage with. But due to this pandemic everything had worsened. Schools/ universities were closed causing everyone to stay in their respective houses. In my case, as a first-year medical student in Mekelle University, it was the start of the second semester that our campus closed. At first, I couldn’t cope up with the fact that I was sitting at home with nothing to do while hundreds of other people were dying every day. It caused me a lot of stress and trauma. But then, there were many things that I remembered I had always wanted to do if I had the time. The first thing I did was to help my brother with his studies (science), a little bit of programming and help him build his social skills so that he

could have a little bit of everything by the time we resumed normalcy. I realized that if you just spend a little time with kids, you can change their perspectives. The second thing that consumed my time were the house chores. I took over all the housework from my mom. I would make food, clean and everything else. This is when I realized what my mom has been doing for all these years. She and all the moms there are real life heroes. She made sure I wouldn’t have any difficulty while she was having it all, and most importantly, she was always smiling. We should give credit to all the moms who made sure we never cry when they always did. Then I started taking online sessions like business and entrepreneurship classes as well as life skills. I also got the chance to pass on these knowledge skills to others. Generally, although it has been rough, we should really brace ourselves and get back to our normal life.”



Siboniseri Makhubela

South Africa



At my school, we didn’t have the online sessions as other schools, yet we had to catch up when schools opened.

“My name is Siboniseri Makhubela, I’m from South Africa and I’m doing my final year in High School. During this pandemic I had to learn a lot of things by myself such as schoolwork some of which was new to me. I had to teach myself how to handle some of the schoolwork, but I did manage doing most of it and therefore understood it well. I had to spend a lot of time at home for which I was not ready, but it taught me how to be independent with my studies. At my school, we didn’t have the online sessions as

other schools, yet we had to catch up when schools opened. We had to learn a lot under pressure, hence, it was so stressful, however, I managed it all. The lockdown has made me more passionate in my schoolwork than I have ever been before.”

Teaching Skills



Uwamahoro Janet

Rwanda

“My name is Janet. I am from Rwanda. Having graduated from High School last year, I had big plans for my gap year. I thought this year would end when I already have my driving license, visited most of my families and friends, toured to different beautiful places here in Rwanda; but COVID-19 was just another adventure. I couldn’t imagine spending 5-6 months not going so far than my local town. Though it was a whole different story from what I expected, it became exciting as time went

by. My stay at home wasn’t just a waste because throughout all this period, I had been assisting some kids in the neighborhood who were still having online classes with their schoolwork. Engaging with these kids wasn’t so smooth most times, it was challenging at some

point, mostly when I had to repeat certain concepts numerous times until they mastered it. I have to say that it taught me a lot more than I imagined. With them, I learnt how to synergize with people whom we have different perspectives and energy in doing stuff and finding



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different tactics to make my point clear to everyone. I recall the joy we always shared whenever they excelled in their school assignments or whenever they grasped a topic that had been challenging for a while. I also had adequate time to

concentrate on my college applications and get ready for college as universities re-opened. So basically, that’s what I had been up to during this COVID-19 period and I hope and pray that this pandemic can get to an end, for life to get back to normal.”



Laetitia Vanganayi

Zimbabwe

“My name is Letticia Vanganayi. I graduated from High School last year and this year, 2020, I was expecting to start my University, pursuing my software engineering career but this all changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I had to stay at home 24/7 not doing much while this led me to reflect on my life, what I really wanted and how could achieve it. That’s when I realized that I wanted to pursue software engineering not because I love it but because I want to show other ladies out there that IT relat-

ed careers are not only for men and that girls can excel in them as well. Therefore, I started teaching 3 little girls from my community basic theory computer lessons and that’s what I am still doing.”



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Education and Household Management Skills



Niyonkuru Marie Chantal

Rwanda

“My name is Niyonkuru Marie Chantal from Rwanda. I completed High School last year (2019) and of course I was ready to pursue University studies this year, 2020, but unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic came. I currently don’t have a job, but I have been helping my younger sisters and brothers with their studies at home as well as my neighbors who study computer science, mathematics, economics and related courses, especially coding (programming). I have also been helping my parents



I have been helping my younger sisters and brothers with their studies...especially coding (programming).

with house chores such as cooking and cleaning. Lastly, I have been searching for universities abroad for scholarships as well as some opportunities that would help me to prepare for my future.”



In my spare time, I did some cooking, baking and assisted my neighbors with their schoolwork.

“My name is Delphine Nyenyasha Shereni from Zimbabwe. I’m currently doing my A-levels while waiting for my end of year exams.

COVID-19 has been hectic especially here in Zimbabwe. But thank God that we are alive and sound. The national lockdown has taught me a plethora of things which I appreciate. I have been attending my school lessons and doing some sports. In my spare time, I did some cooking, baking and assisted my neighbors with their schoolwork. I never thought it would be so much fun, I really enjoyed it.”

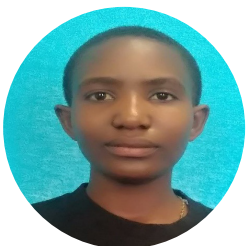


Delphine Nyenyasha Shereni

Zimbabwe



I got the opportunity to teach coding to my siblings using SCRATCH programming language.



Thereza Joseph

Tanzania

“COVID-19 pandemic has been very stressful, but it has also given an opportunity to family members to be close to one other. While I was home during the COVID-19 pandemic, I got the opportunity to teach coding to my siblings using SCRATCH programming language. I’m not perfect with coding yet but I managed to share what I had learned from the African Girls Can

Code Initiative Camp that was held in South Africa 2019. My siblings loved it a lot and I’m glad that they have ultimately considered ICT as part of their career choices. Following school closures due to COVID-19, I did a lot of cooking at home and house chores compared to other days. I learned to cook plenty of foods that I had not known before, especially the local foods, with my mom being my tutor. This has been like an opportunity for me to understand more on personal responsibilities especially at the family level.”

Education, ICT and Coding Skills

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, I opted to have a small project for children at primary level with groups of young children from the ages 10 to 13 to be taught coding using different block coding languages, but the catch was to align the project with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.



Sizolwethu Maphanga

Kingdom of Eswatini

“My name is Sizolwethu Maphanga, I’m from Swaziland. I graduated from High School last year and had been preparing myself for University, but because of COVID-19 I came across so many problems that hindered me from executing my plans. This year, I had a big plan for the younger generation and had hoped that I would launch a project. Due to lack of resources, I opted to have a small project for children at primary level with groups of young children from the ages 10 to 13 to be taught coding using different block coding languages, but the catch was to align the project with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The project was meant to instill knowledge from the problems that the world was facing, as well as encouraging children to tackle those problems at an early stage, as they easily comprehend new concepts. This project was to be introduced to Primary Schools, however, due to COVID-19 we were confined to work with a smaller group of kids.”

“During my stay at home due to closure of schools since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have engaged in solving local problems. Since my training was focused on IT and robotics, I have engaged in application by using coding whilst sharing the ideas with my friends, and also practicing what I had trained in especially observing videos via my PC. I tried to familiarize myself with different software and enjoyed my time studying next year’s subjects. I hope all these things will provide me an opportunity to join University.”

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Liyunesh Muse

Ethiopia

Education, ICT and Coding Skills

Raah Pazorora

Zimbabwe



The lockdown has necessitated us to teach ourselves and study more than we normally would do.

“My name is Raah and I’m from Zimbabwe. I’m in my final year of High School. COVID-19 has adversely affected our learning as we were unable to complete our syllabuses on time. Online learning has become a necessity in our country; however it is not as effective as it was initially anticipated because data bundles are very expensive and unaffordable to the majority of students. Our internet network is also bad and other parts of our country, especially the rural areas cannot even connect to the internet. The lockdown has necessitated us to teach ourselves and study more than we normally would do. During this lockdown, I have been having discussions with my friends online, in preparation for examinations at the end of year. I have also been tutoring my friend’s younger siblings in coding and in other computer science concepts. This lockdown has encouraged me to be able to better communicate

with people online as I currently do revision with people from across my country whom I have never met before. The lockdown also encouraged me to improve my baking and cooking skills. I have also been able to improve my coding skills and I am currently working on a school management system for my finals. The closing of schools has allowed me to research better and improve on my project.”



Albertina Erastus

Namibia

“I am Albertina Erastus, a Namibian citizen. I’m currently doing my Grade 12. COVID-19 has ruined most of my plans. Closures of most schools has been such a difficulty because online classes have been introduced and most of my fellow learners from rural areas have no access to internet and that caused a lot of problems with the continuation of online classes. However, it hasn’t stopped me from pursuing my dreams. In fact, it has made me stronger and wiser enough to support others. Ever since I attended the coding programme

in South Africa last year, I’ve been focusing more on how to stop GBV and think of more ideas about GBV as well as sewing clothes applying the TURTLE STITCH method (based on a browser on educational programming language). I have taught some of my friends about it as well.

I’ve managed to teach them with my computer/laptop that I received thankfully, from the program. For those of us that were taught about coding, we all know that coding has benefited us way beyond the screen. Before discovering TUTLE

Education, ICT and Coding Skills

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Hanna Wasihun

Ethiopia

STITCH, I wasn't sure if I would ever have thought of embroidery as one of those benefits. I've educated my friends how they can code using turtle stitch even though it wasn't easy doing it because I didn't have the right equipment to show them how it's correctly done, but I managed to explain it to them."

"With the increase of GBV in Namibia, I have spent my time thinking of ways to help in bringing an end to GBV, such as participating in GBV training programs and introducing more programs for people especially the Girl Child to be more educated about it and learn ways on how to protect themselves when caught in such precarious scenarios. Educating my fellow mates has been

"COVID-19 is a global pandemic which has caused a global crisis. Schools were closed for the last 8 months". It was a very boring and difficult moment especially for us girls. Here in our country, Ethiopia, many girls have been exposed to sexual abuse. In our village, girls gathered and created awareness on how to protect ourselves and inform the authorities near us of such cases. In the rural areas, students do not have access to smart technology. As such, I have been working on designing a platform for cell phones to access online technology especially for online learning purposes. These have been the activities that I have engaged in to pass time."

such a great feeling to me because I have been sharing life changing lessons and allowing other fellows to experience what it means to code. As such, I'm certain that a lot of lives will be changed in different communities at large whether in the rural or urban spheres."

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Entrepreneurship and House Management Skills

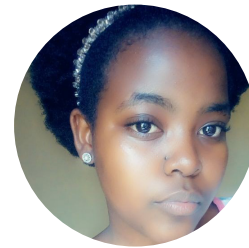
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There's a small parlor in my neighborhood where I try to advertise some of the few things that I've managed to make and hence, I'm developing a small business step by step.

“I'm Ainembabazi Shena from Uganda. I was supposed to have joined the University by now but due to COVID-19, there has been a delay and most likely, 2020, will be a dead year academically. During this period, however, I've been able to learn how to bake and make crochets (knitting). I was already equipped with the basics, so it was quite easy to pick up from where I had started. There's a small parlor in my neighborhood where I try to advertise some of the few things that I've managed to make and hence, I'm developing a small business step by step. Thank you.”

Ainembabazi Shena

Uganda



Jolie Katupose

Namibia

“I'm Jolie Katupose, 18 years of age from Namibia. This year, I started University, and as things were progressing, the Corona Virus came about and altered everyone's daily routine. Having to change from going to school every day to attending online classes gradually taught me to become more responsible. School had been occupying a lot of my time. Despite being at home, there was so much to do in so little time, where I developed time management skills. I learned how to quickly get home chores done without missing my classes and finishing up my assignments on time. When the semester was over, I had more time on my hands and got to help out at home with spring cleaning and cooking. For my leisure time, I sketched, played with puzzles as well as assisted my siblings with their schoolwork.

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For my leisure time, I sketched, played with puzzles as well as assisted my siblings with their schoolwork. Now that semester two is around the corner, I am confident that I have been adequately preparing myself.

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Community Service, Support and Time Management Skills



Bohlale Masebo

Lesotho

“During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, our country, Lesotho went into a lockdown. At that time many families in my neighborhood were going through a rough time with finances as some lost their jobs. To help these families and meet them halfway with their needs, my mum started a feeding scheme and I decided to volunteer to help her where possible. What I did was mainly to help cook for the less privileged children in the village. We would invite them over at around 4pm for dinner and then serve them from their own plates. It was amazing when my sister and I initiated new fun games for the kids and they also very much enjoyed it. Towards the end of the feeding scheme when our country got a few recoveries, my mum partnered with some organizations to hand out food parcels so that even when the kids no longer came, at least they would have food for the next two months or so. The most interesting part was that we drove around my neighborhood deliver-

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Some children could not even afford a meal, so the food parcels relieved most parents from a lot of stress.

ing food parcels to the children’s parents. It was an emotional experience as the parents were so happy and grateful that they received those parcels. Some children could not even afford a meal, so the food parcels relieved most parents from a lot of stress.”



Hiwot Ayalew

Ethiopia

“My Name is Hiwot Ayalew. During this pandemic, my family and I have been helping our community members and our neighbors who have lower income, where we have been sharing our food and money; and we have been praying for them and for our world, for God to heal our world.”

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Community Service, Support and Time Management Skills



Shalom Nigusu

Ethiopia

“My name is Shalom Nigusu from Ethiopia. As we all have been staying at home during the pandemic of COVID-19, I personally have been practicing many things like sketching, designing clothes, cooking a lot and spending time with my family. While this pandemic has had negative effects on all of us, it has also been a great opportunity to finish up on the things we couldn’t before and to take some time to ponder over our future.”



I personally have been practicing many things like sketching, designing clothes, cooking a lot and spending time with my family.

“My name’s Ngurimuje Tjivikua. I am 21 years old and from the land of the brave, Namibia. I’m a first-year student at the University of Namibia. For me, the pandemic has pushed me to do what I am most passionate about, which is helping others and being of service where I am needed. I co-founded a donation center along with my sister right in the comfort of our own home. We put out a poster to reach out to people who had clothes, blankets, shoes other things to donate and the response we got was beyond our expectations. As winter was just starting here in Namibia, we were driven to help even faster.”

“We had pick up days, laundry days and drop off days and through it all we met amazing people and heard

stories that warmed our hearts which is why, to this day, we still continue to help where we can. Although our self-started donation center may not be the biggest, we are still able to help others and we get to see from the people that we donate to that we can still restore faith in humanity. I believe that it taught our family that being of service to others is just as important as being served (they helped quite a lot) and I also believe our community may not always seem caring but they continue to come through when it matters the most.”



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Ngurimuje Tjivikua

Namibia

Community Service, Support and Time Management Skills



**Murielle
Iradukunda**

Burundi



With some friends, I had initiated an association to help the neediest, especially children, by helping them to revise their courses. We then had to do this help online, but since an internet connection or a simple telephone access was not possible for most, we were unable to achieve the expected results.

“My name is Murielle Iradukunda, I come from Burundi. I am currently in my second year of scientific preparatory class in France. The pandemic period has been both hard and rewarding. I had to learn very quickly on how to follow online courses, take exams on the internet while avoiding all the distractions that the internet can bring. I can really say that I became more responsible and better organized, because the containment offered plenty of time for us, but the important thing was to know how to manage it. It was a new way of life for me; with the friends I was with, we invented or discovered new sports and new games. This period also taught me to discover myself. I never imagined that a poem by ‘Baudelaire’ could make me dream big, or even that the writer ‘Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’ would make me think through her novels about life and its shortcomings and the imminent need to remedy the injustices of the world. During the confinement, I began to write. So many ideas were running through my mind. And as time was not running out for once, I thought it would be better to dedicate it to something useful. I am presently writing about the social injustices that many Burundians suffer. I don’t know if the story will be successful, but at least I would have had the opportunity to reflect on some of the problems that my compatriots are facing and how I could contribute to improving the situation. I had so many plans for this year, but in the end none of them were actualized. With some

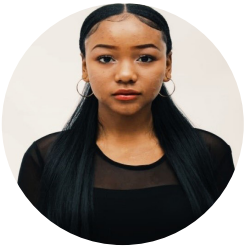
friends, I had initiated an association to help the neediest, especially children, by helping them to revise their courses. We then had to do this help online, but since an internet connection or a simple telephone access was not possible for most, we were unable to achieve the expected results.”

“In short, life was not all that bad during this pandemic period. There were moments of uncertainty, but also moments of hope. I discovered a new kind of joy, like the simple joy of seeing someone without having to hold them in your arms. To quote Nietzsche, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” This pandemic has taught me a new way of life, a new way of being of service to others, and I would even say, another self that only needed time to manifest itself.”

Media and Technology Skills

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I am also an intern at one of the biggest media holdings in the country which has made a huge difference as well in my life. I've also been using this time to get more creative and generate content for my YouTube channel.



Hinuarue Rijatua

Namibia

“My name is Hinuarue Rijatua from Namibia. COVID-19 has had a major impact not only my day to day life but on my year in general. I am currently a first-year student at the University of Namibia where assimilation to the entire system of university has been extremely difficult from the start, even more so now that everything was shifted online. This hasn't only affected me, but most of my classmates as well due to connectivity issues and especially students from rural areas who have no access to these online learning platforms. COVID-19 has created tremendous stress and demotivation to university life as this was a major transition for me, however, I've been trying to stay positive! I decided to channel all my frustrations into the arts and technology sector. I study Media where I work at a National Television station as a presenter. Journalism has given me so much motivation to use this time to center my energy in the things that I love doing. I am also an intern at one of the biggest media holdings in the country which has made a huge difference as well in my life. I've also been using this time to get more creative and generate content for my YouTube channel.”

“As much as some good has been borne of COVID-19, gender-based violence (GBV), human trafficking and kidnappings have become pressing issues in our country, affecting especially the women. Nowhere is safe anymore and we are constantly in fear of our lives. It is because of this that I often find my-

self pondering over programmes that could be developed to make everyday life safer for women- be it tracking devices hidden in arm bracelets or watches, safe transportation apps, programs that one could log their specific location to provide information as you move from place to place which would immediately be sent to a loved one if anything wrong happens to them and so forth. Honestly, I just want life to be easier for women. Young girls are even experiencing sexual abuse in quarantine facilities. It is hard to find the positive sometimes when everything around you screams danger.”

Language and Writing Skills



Thobile Ngwenya

South Africa



I have classmates who did not even have any gadgets to receive timetables, studying materials, or any kind of information which led to them to lag with the classwork.

“Greetings to Everyone. I hope everyone is keeping safe. I am Thobile Ngwenya from South Africa. When the year started, I had never envisioned my matric year to be the way it turned out. Staying at home and having to teach yourself on how to stay disciplined and focused, was one of the things I had to do. Everyone was at home so you could imagine the mayhem. Despite that, I tried using this pandemic period to my advantage. I learnt basic greetings in Korean Language, where I taught my younger siblings since the schools were closed. The challenges that I encountered were:

a) Resources

Online learning required a lot data which was something I battled with. I used 10GB for only one week which disadvantaged me because I missed out on classes.

b) Time Management

At home, everyone expected everything to operate as usual, e.g. House Chores. My classes used to start from 08:00-20:00 and after that, I had to study which made me sleep late. At home, they’d expect me to do the house chores and at the same time attend a class. That’s something I battled with but at the end, it all turned out well. I discovered that I was not the only one who was disadvantaged when it came to resources. I live in a Township area and some of the assumptions that are made about people who live here are that they can meet their basic needs but that’s not usually the case. I have classmates

who did not even have any gadgets to receive timetables, studying materials, or any kind of information which led to them to lag with the classwork. There were some people who did as they pleased during this pandemic before our government could ease the restrictions. Some would write on their walls that “COVID-19 is a scam,” which really made me feel disappointed. What I learnt from this pandemic is to be ready for anything. No one knows what might happen tomorrow, but you surely can make the most of today. Perseverance and endurance produce success and courage.”

Language Skills



Mikelani Chivende

Zimbabwe

“During this lockdown period, I decided to venture into writing. I started on a story with the name “The demonic lover,” which talks about Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and how victims of GBV tend to ignore warning signs of abuse while providing excuses for their abusers. I also took a step and began to write poems that empower women, so they can stand firm and independent with no fear.”

“I believe that not everyone is able to express their feelings and experiences, especially those from abusive and oppressive backgrounds, hence, through reading other similar experiences, they can gain some confidence in opening up, facilitating their healing process, which may ultimately bring them solutions. I believe that my writing will also develop the reading culture in my societies and expose the social evils that the youth face. I have written another story titled “Behind your eyes,” which looks more into hidden public secrets.” Below is one of my poems:

To rose.	Lying in pieces of hate
To rose of a “she”	Who never tasted a fair share of her plate
She would marry any “He”	We stand to bury your fate!
Dead or alive...	
That would give her life!	To ancestor Rose
	We dig into your pride
To rose of a miss	To take a new ride
Who would kill to be Mrs	Burying the beginning & the end
Rich or poor she would dream	Starting the beginning in the end!
A beautiful rich dream.	
	Masane the great (CMM POETRY)]
To Mrs Rose the late	

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