

givelTback donates solar PC lab to KZN school

Africa's first commercially available solar powered container (PC) lab built within a shipping container, will improve access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in non-affluent, rural and remote communities; a challenge that has been contributing to economic and social inequality in South Africa.



715 learners at Umhloti Primary School in Verulam, KwaZulu-Natal, will benefit from the power of the sun when product developer, givelTback, in partnership with Poynting and African Union Communications, donated the first of its solar PC labs on 5 December 2014.

The digital divide, where less fortunate learners do not have access to, use of, or knowledge of ICT, has a major impact on economic and social inequality in South Africa. Access to ICT enables students to actively seek information and engage in interactive educational activities, which contributes significantly to their development and eventual competitiveness in the job market.

Since inception in 2009, givelTback has successfully installed 21 fully functioning computer labs in schools throughout the country, positively impacting over 20,000 underprivileged children.

Infrastructure required

"Despite many successful installations, we found it disheartening that schools first required basic infrastructure such as electricity, an available classroom and have suitable security measures in place before qualifying to receive a computer lab," says Jonathan D. Michael, founder of givelTback. "Being dependant on the schools' existing infrastructure meant that we had to turn down so many deserving requests for help."

The solar PC labs are specifically developed for non-affluent schools, addressing lack of electrical infrastructure, lack of building infrastructure and lack of access to technology. These shipping container labs will give schools in areas where help is needed most the opportunity to give their learners the best chance at a bright future.

"Over and above the standard benefits of using clean energy and driving rural development, the solar powered container lab allows sponsors to assist any community both locally and internationally, regardless of existing infrastructure restrictions," Michael explains.

Easy transportation

"The reused shipping container allows for easy transportation and durability, while minimising the environmental impact of the lab from the construction phase. The lab also has the added benefit of operating completely off the grid through the use of solar powered green energy, which makes it even more accessible to rural and desolate schools," says Michael.

"We feel privileged to be the first school to receive a solar powered container lab with which we will be able to expose our learners to so much possibility through computers and access to the internet," says Badsha Adam, Umhloti Primary School principal. "We believe that computer literacy is a vital skill that will benefit our learners for the rest of their lives."

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