

Low-cost computing for education.

AfricAid brings cutting-edge computing to the children of Tanzania

Challenge

Upgrade the IT infrastructure in Tanzanian schools to deliver low-cost, low-energy, easily maintainable PC access to students in a replicable fashion.

Solution

After reviewing various thin client and netbook solutions, AfricAid used the NComputing X-series to help educate nearly 2,000 students.

Impact

A local Internet provider was so impressed with the solution that they agreed to provide Internet access free of charge at the first two schools. The entire school has been so excited about the new cutting-edge technology that students are spending more time in the labs, both during school hours and after school.

AfricAid is a nonprofit organisation that supports girls' education in Africa, providing young women with the opportunity to transform their lives and to positively impact the futures of their communities.

AfricAid's latest project provides school scholarships and leadership training to some of Africa's brightest young women through specially designed curriculum, digital storytelling, and interactive websites. Delivering this program requires reliable, accessible PCs, yet AfricAid struggles with the costs of keeping their traditional PCs functioning.



NComputing and AfricAid offer a bright future to students in Tanzania

Developing tomorrow's leaders

Like most providers of PCs for education, AfricAid first considered replacing their outdated and virus-infected hardware with new PCs. However, as a non-profit organisation managing a range of new and ongoing projects across Africa, they could not justify putting extensive financial and human resources into installing and managing traditional PCs on an ongoing basis. AfricAid also wanted a solution that was easy to replicate in many more schools across the region. "When we started this project we considered many options, ranging from new PCs to traditional thin client solutions to netbooks, but each solution came with their own set of issues, including compatibility, availability, pricing, ongoing maintenance costs, and complex multi-site roll outs," commented Louis Alberto Gutierrez, IT Manager at AfricAid.

“We have gained immense recognition from our donors and supporters on finding such a low-cost energy-efficient solution”

LOUIS ALBERTO GUTIERREZ
IT MANAGER
AFRICAID

“With NComputing we got a lot more than we expected!”

“With the NComputing solution we got a lot more than we expected. We originally selected the X-series based on performance, price, availability in Tanzania, compatibility with the Ubuntu OS, and the availability of technical support resources. But in addition, we found the low energy consumption of NComputing very appealing, along with the decreased need for ongoing maintenance,” stated Gutierrez.

The NComputing solution is based on the fact that today’s PCs are so powerful that the vast majority of applications only use a small fraction of the computer’s capacity. NComputing’s virtualisation software and hardware tap this unused capacity so that multiple users can simultaneously share it. Using this cutting-edge technology, AfricAid is able to provide PC and internet access to a population of thousands of students at a fraction of the cost of traditional PCs.

“We saved thousands of dollars on the installation compared to the cheapest alternative solution we reviewed. Then, after visiting our site, a local Internet provider was so impressed with the setup that they agreed to provide Internet access free of charge at our first two partner schools. But looking at the bigger picture, the computer labs are a fundamental component of the success of the project in offering these girls a brighter future. Most of the students have already started using the labs during the school day, and after school to do internet-based research,” added Gutierrez.

The future is bright for the girls of Tanzania

AfricAid has aggressive growth targets in the region, which means the future is very exciting for the people of Tanzania. Management of future NComputing installations will be delegated to host country nationals to help them become self-sufficient. Four additional schools in Tanzania will be added in 2010, with many more sites planned over the next four years.

“NComputing has allowed AfricAid to achieve its goal of connecting scholarship students in Tanzania to their sponsors in the USA via internet communications. These connections allow meaningful, cross-cultural dialogue to take place, and also allow our scholarship students to build vital computer and IT skills,” concluded Gutierrez.

