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## **GITP's Diwali Vacation Camp on Computer Programming successfully nearing completion in 3 Goan village schools**

While the Goan authorities are pre-occupied with organizing IFFI, the Project GEIT (Goans Empowered with Information Technology) by Goa IT Professionals (GITP) took a major step forward this Diwali vacation with its 9-day Computer Programming camp for students of classes 6-9 in 3 Goan village schools i.e. St. Bartholomew's High School (Chorao, Tiswadi), Azmane High School (Neura, Mandur, Tiswadi) and Dayanand Bandodkar High School (Gokulde, Padi, Quepem). On an average 18, 20 and 60+ students respectively in these schools are attending this camp daily during November 16-25 based on Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA) computer programming platform called SCRATCH especially designed for children. It brings a world-class, hands-on exposure to computer technology to the village children of Goa with the objective of converting them from consumers to creators in the field of computer technology. It also helps shift the children's focus to the creative, learning and productive aspects of the computer and internet technology world instead of the negative aspects like pornography that they unfortunately got exposed to via the disastrous school Tablets scheme by the Goa government few years ago.

This camp proves a key point that Goans and their well-wishers can help Goans in Goa without any dependence on the state government as explained hereon. With barely 1 and 5 PCs respectively working in 2 of these 3 schools, our Project GEIT team had to reach out to Goan IT experts for a solution. Anay Kamat proposed using the micro-computer Raspberry Pi2 kits to replace the dead CPUs (Central Processing Unit of a PC) in these schools which were then procured from an authorised dealer in Kerala with funding from the Goan and well-wisher community. Additionally few other Goans donated their old laptops and hardware. As a result 12 dead PCs were revived making it possible for the students to get hands-on learning experience with SCRATCH. Due to other priorities and exams when the originally expected volunteers from National Institute of Technology, Govt. Engineering College and Goa University became unavailable for this camp our Project GEIT team sent out an SOS appeal for volunteers and a number of Goans and well-wishers, including those without any Computers background as well as class 7-8 students from city schools, came forward to learn SCRATCH within couple days and teach it to the village students at these 3 schools. Additionally sessions on special topics like Astronomy & Mobile Apps, 3D Printing, MIT's App Inventor and Robotics have been organized under this camp in these schools by volunteers from the Goan IT start-up community. Towards the end of this camp Project GEIT team also plans to introduce these students to the "Hour of Code" tutorial on computer programming which takes it to another level altogether with its computer programming exercises based on blockbuster animation movies, games and themes like Frozen, Angry Birds, Minecraft etc. However this is at risk due to the virtually non-existent broadband connectivity at most Goan village schools despite the state government's tall claims of fibre-optic broadband connectivity to all Goan villages.

Students at these 3 schools have taken to computer programming like fish to water. Not

surprising given the existing Goa Education board's boring and clerical curriculum centred around Microsoft Office. The management teams at each of these 3 schools have been very supportive of Project GEIT and greatly contributed to the successful organization and progress of this camp so far. For a change they are noticing their students glued to the PCs productively learning computer programming without being forced to. Computer teachers at the Chorao and Neura schools are actively involved in this camp and themselves learning and helping the students learn SCRATCH programming.

Project GEIT team is sincerely grateful for the all-round support it has received so far to make this camp a success proving a key point that Goans and their well-wishers can themselves bring about a change and enable Goans to prosper in Goa without waiting for the politicians and governments to get their act together. Going forward Project GEIT will organize weekly computer programming classes for these 3 schools culminating in a state-level contest to be held in January 2016 with active support expected from National Institute of Technology, Govt. Engineering College and Goa University. By this year-end, Project GEIT will also provide a ready-to-use and easy-to-implement template for all Goan schools to voluntarily introduce simplified computer programming like **SCRATCH** and *Hour of Code* as an extra-curricular activity in order to expand this community planned, funded, organized, monitored and driven initiative to cover all of Goa.

You may refer our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/GoansEmpoweredWithIT](http://www.facebook.com/GoansEmpoweredWithIT)) for the day-wise reporting of this Diwali Vacation Camp at each of these 3 schools and contact us for high resolution copies of any of the photos therein. GITP would much appreciate if your publications could cover this camp in a detailed feature to spread awareness about the positive change and empowerment that computer technology could help bring to Goa and its people, especially the generations presently in school.