

PRESS RELEASE

MIT Leads Social IT Solutions Workshop with Dar Es Salaam Institute of Technology and State University of Zanzibar

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DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA – A team of scholars and students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is leading a Social IT Solutions workshop with lecturers and students from the Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT) and the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) from January 7-18, 2019.

The two-week workshop aims to equip Tanzanian students with knowledge and skills in the areas of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for development, human-centered design, and digital media.

“Students at DIT and SUZA currently have access to a computer science curriculum, but given the demands of that curriculum there is little time to think analytically or entrepreneurially about the socioeconomic impacts and development potentials of information technologies,” said MIT’s Professor Lisa Parks.

Prior to conducting the workshop, Dr. Parks, who leads MIT’s Global Media Technologies and Cultures Lab, met with Tanzanian educators and students at DIT and SUZA to better understand their needs and goals.

“Educators told me that students often learn programming languages and code in a curriculum that is distinct from considerations of Tanzania’s socioeconomic conditions and development challenges. Furthermore, very few female students are studying computer science at DIT,” said Dr. Parks. “This workshop is intended to help address some of these issues, and is being led by MIT graduate students, Rachel Thompson, Iago Bojczuk, and Han Su from the Comparative Media Studies program.”

The MIT team, which includes citizens of Brazil, China, and the US, will work alongside lecturers from DIT and SUZA to facilitate the two-week intensive workshop for Tanzanian computer science, electronics and telecommunication engineering students. “This is really an international team of facilitators. I believe, DIT and SUZA students will also experience new student-centred and interactive teaching methodology that will be used in this workshop as well as diverse cultural exchange,” said Dr. Matiko. Apart from students engaging with social issues, the training will also equip them with creative and entrepreneurial mindsets that can prepare them for self-employment and support the Tanzanian Government initiatives of industrialisation.

DIT and SUZA students will work together in teams to develop IT solutions that address social challenges in Tanzania, and will present their final projects on Friday, January 18, 2019 before a panel of judges. Student projects aim to address such issues as the pricing of fresh produce, access to emergency services, queues at hospitals and banks, urban mobility for the disabled, online sharing of temporary jobs

and employment, and feedback systems for public service organizations. The winning team will receive an award and all workshop participants will receive a certificate of completion.

The workshop facilitators include Dr. Abubakar Bakar (SUZA), Dr. Joseph Matiko (DIT), Dr. Lisa Parks (MIT), and graduate students, Iago Bojczuk (MIT), Han Su (MIT), and Rachael Thompson (MIT). We are grateful for funding awarded through a MIT J-WEL Grant in Higher Education Innovation. This project comes under the umbrella of the MIT-Africa Initiative, and is also supported by the Global Media Technologies and Cultures Lab (<http://globalmedia.mit.edu/>) and the MacArthur Fellows Program.

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