NEW LITERACY AND THE CHANGEMAKER GENERATION
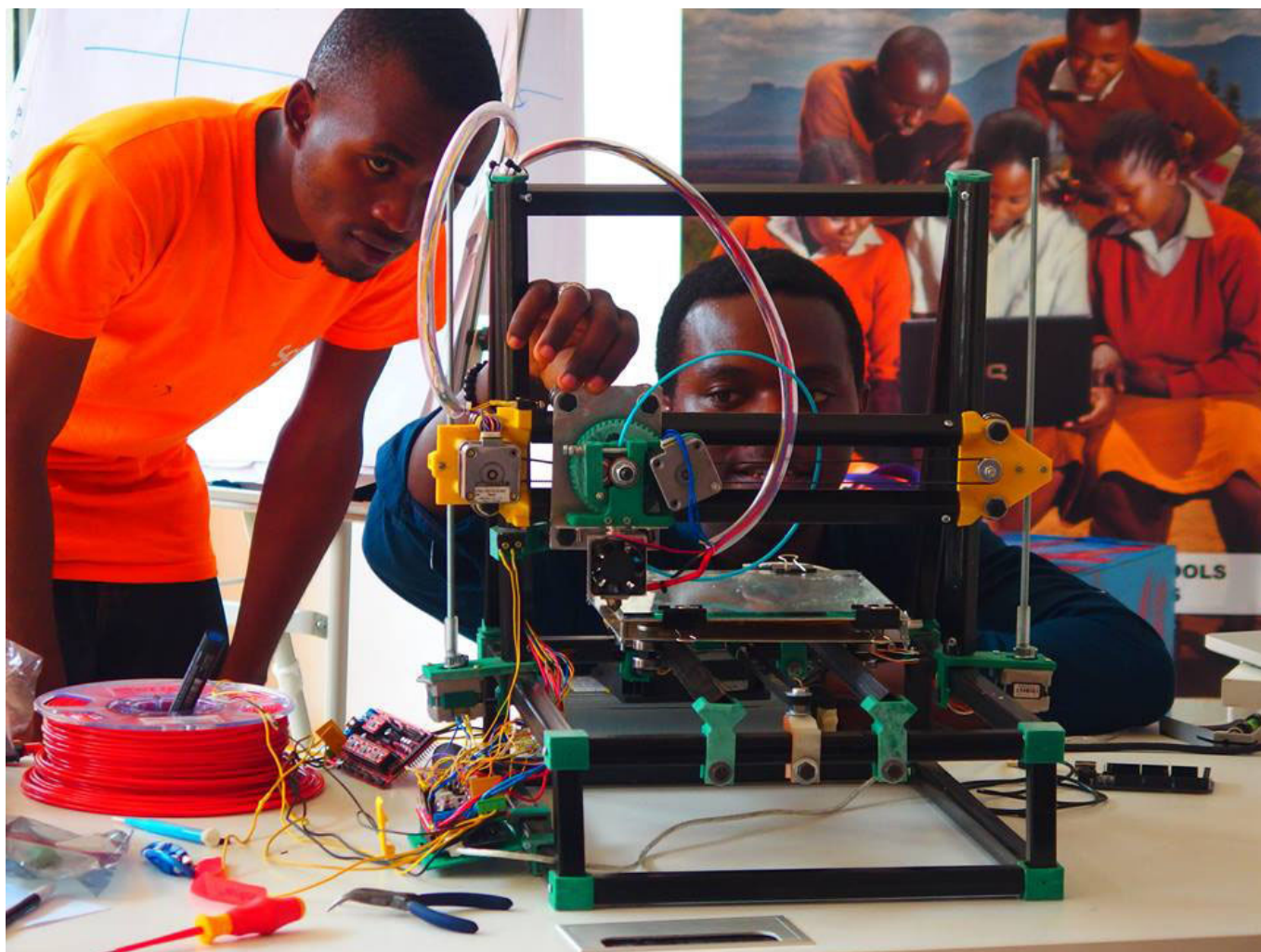

This essay summarizes Henry De Sio's opening keynote address to the International Symposium, The Transformative Nature of Education: Underpinning Social and Economic Transformations (University of Tasmania, July 2015). Published with courtesy of Henry De Sio and Ashoka.

Social entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to help facilitate societal understanding of the learning needs of young people in a world where changemaking is the new norm.

Every child must master empathy and teens must be practiced at the new requisite skills of cognitive empathy-based ethics, working in team of teams (a different type of team work), new leadership and changemaking.

Transformative education must begin with a fresh look at the societal landscape our children and youth are stepping into. A historical shift has radically changed the complexion and complexity of the world our children must learn to command. While most of us still see the world as it was when we entered (allowing for some expected evolutionary change), it is really quite dissimilar to the one our young people will soon navigate as adults. In fact, the two are in many ways polar opposites, each requiring a very different skill set and outlook. Rising generations must be equipped with an entirely new learning framework for life success and contribution that is aligned with the transformed strategic environment that awaits.

For many generations, society had a distinctive organizational design char-

Innovation hubs offer a shared space to young technologists and entrepreneurs helping them access the vital structure in which they are able to develop and apply their skills.

acterized by a few people at the top of the system telling everyone else to repeat their specialized skills harmoniously, faster and faster. The limits of this one-leader-at-a-time model have become evident, however. The acceleration of change and the consequential proliferation of problems have overwhelmed our institutions. Today, the walls of vertical society are coming down to reveal a new strategic landscape that is fast, fluid, and hybrid in character.

With hierarchies flattening, silos collapsing, and advances in technology lowering the barriers to individual participation, more of us have the ability to access information and contribute more fully in every aspect of society. We carry in our pockets and purses, the tools that were once available to only a few. Our personal networks, collaboration platforms, printing presses and media distribution channels – these are now at our fingertips and can be applied to any

problem or opportunity. Our one-leader-at-a-time past is giving way to a new everyone-a-leader present.

This level of individual empowerment has given rise to the Changemaker

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Defined by efficiency in repetition	Defined by change and innovation
One leader at a time	Everyone recognized as a leader and powerful contributor
Team based on repetitive skills executed harmoniously in a vertical system	Team of teams evolving across old boundaries to address complex challenges in a hybrid landscape
Be practiced at a skill	Be practiced at the core skills of empathy, teamwork, new leadership, and change-making
Transaction	Interaction
Premium on expertise and authority based on specific knowledge	Premium on ethical fiber – personal credibility and authenticity based on change-making for the good
Communication through authoritative voice	Communication through storytelling and experiences
Limited distribution of information based on "need to know" to perform a job or function	Open, transparent communication flow based on everyone having information on which to form a team of teams and act

Effect on society. A simple explanation of this phenomenon follows:

In the everyone-leads system, the speed of change accelerates relative to our one-leader-at-a-time past. Why? Leaders make change. If you agree that everything you change changes everything, and everyone is doing it – then it follows that we live in an everyone-a-changemaker world.

The rapid increase in the number of changemakers is producing unprecedented omnidirectional change in society, and it's occurring at a rapidly accelerating rate. Evolutionary adaptation has long existed, but this transition from a world defined by repetition to one uniquely defined by change is as dramatic as making the shift from a flat world to a round one.

We are faced with a game-changing moment as society shifts from a longstanding model based on repetition to the polar-opposite game of change. This process will challenge all of our existing notions for how we work together and participate effectively in society.

For example, teamwork in the repetitive system was based on contribution to the team along narrow lines of position or function. The new game requires a very different kind of teamwork – team-of-teams – to command an environment of rapidly accelerating change. In this system, everyone must have the capacity to form into an open, fluid team of teams working across old boundaries to confront complex challenges and to create new possibilities. Different from the old team built on specialized skills, individuals are valued for their unique range of competencies, perspectives, passions and experiences that can be brought to the opportunity at hand.

This gets to a second point about the differences between the two paradigms. In the new game, the premium is on innovation as a function of change, not repetition. If innovation had long been associated with advances in technology to create more efficiency in repetition – the assembly line, for example – we must now rethink that connotation in this new context.

Innovation is, in fact, the ultimate result of a wall falling between two sides that would not otherwise connect. Sometimes technology assists in this, at other times it is an outcome, but innovation is a very human activity. In the team-of-teams way of working, the value-add in any moment is the new team added to an existing one to act on the ever-changing nature of today's problems and opportunities. The ability to tear down walls and connect other into a team of teams is, therefore, a requisite new leadership skill.

Third, we need a rewiring of our collective thinking about leadership in this new era in which everyone leads. Leadership in the team-of-teams system is not linear – it's omnidirectional, requiring "other-awareness". It is a new kind of leadership that also requires everyone on the team to see the big picture and advance solutions that contribute to positive change.

All of this points to the fact that one-leader-at-a-time and Everyone a Changemaker ™ are opposing paradigms. The skills needed to navigate a world based on efficiency in rep-
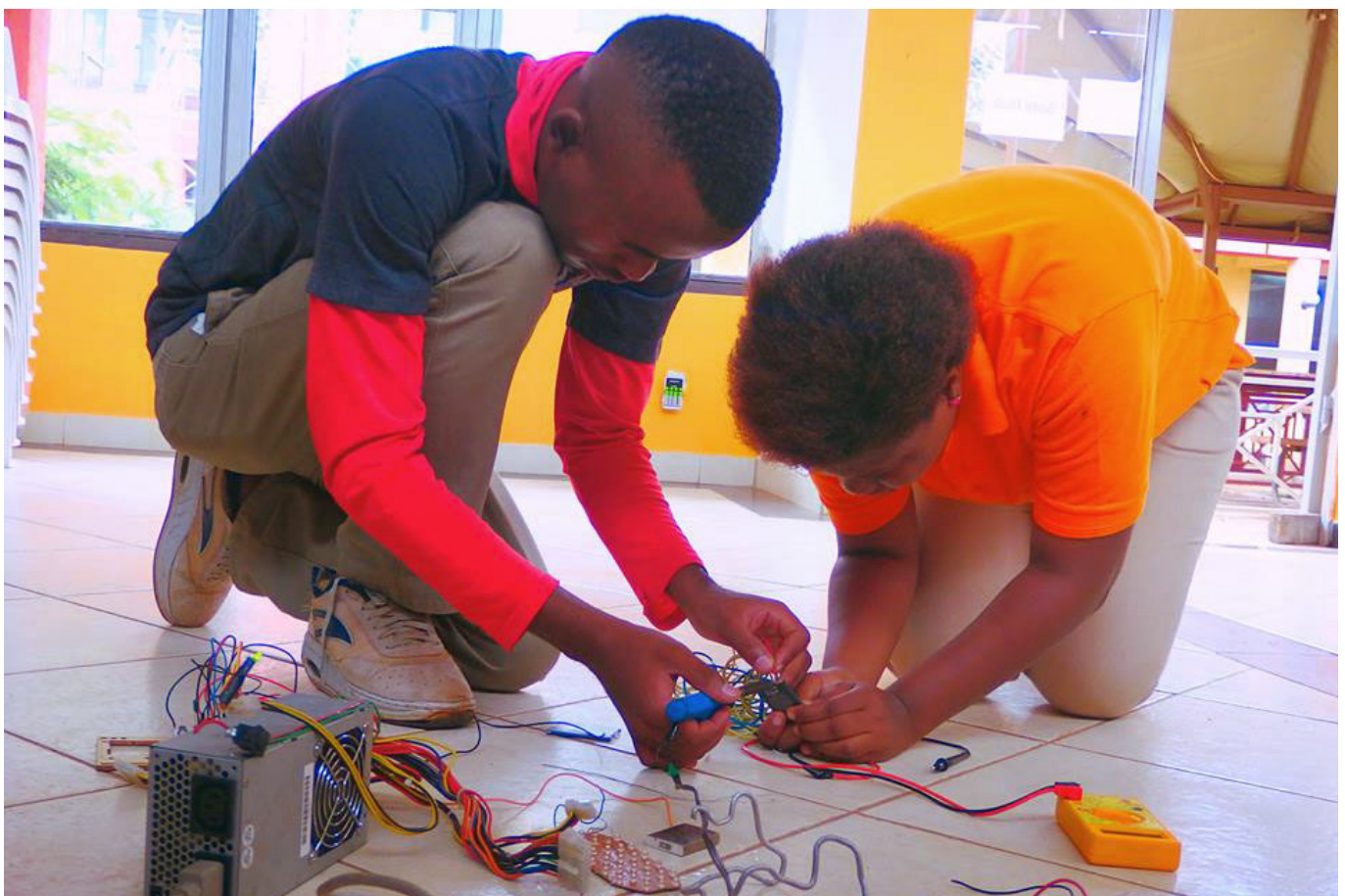
Young high school graduates learning to create innovative products through experimenting with coding and technology.

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etition are very different from those in a world where the premium is on change and innovation (see table).

In a world of interaction and complexity – one that relies on collaboration for success and contribution – the stakes for every child mastering empathy have never been higher. Team-of-teams is a way of working that is highly interactive and individual integrity, a premium standard in this system, is directly proportional to change pursued for the good. Also, rules can't keep up with this level of change, making cognitive empathy-based ethics essential in our everyday leadership and changemaking.

Youth learning must, therefore, be calibrated so teens are practicing cognitive empathy-based ethics, co-creative teamwork (team-of-teams), a new kind of leadership in which everyone on the team is an initiatory player, and changemaking. Learning in early grades must be focused on the mastery of empathy as a fundamental skill needed for success and contribution in today's dynamically changing world.

To make this framework the foundation for education transformation, there must be societal awareness of the historical forces that are reshap-

ing the global landscape. What is needed today is sustained shift in thinking. Mindset shift at scale will produce the broader imperative for framework change at scale.

To this end, social impact leaders are uniquely positioned to help facilitate a global mindset shift that will lead to societal framework change. Thirty-five years ago, Bill Drayton, a pioneer of social entrepreneurship, introduced the notion that there is nothing more powerful than a bold new idea in the hands of an exceptional entrepreneur innovating for the good of all. Behind his visionary leadership, the field of social entrepreneurship has grown. Today, the organization he founded, Ashoka, has a fellowship comprised of the world's leading social entrepreneurs, numbering more than 3, 200 innovators in 85 countries.

Social entrepreneurs are system changers who work tirelessly for the public. Drayton describes these individuals as society's "essential corrective force". In addition to the ideas they bring to bear on the world's most complex issues, leading social entrepreneurs have mastered the key skills needed for the new societal paradigm, and they apply them to tackle these seemingly intractable social challenges. Ashoka social entrepreneurs everywhere – regardless of culture, religion, or political system – act on their empathy and inspire other changemakers by removing obstacles that hinder inovation and create the conditions for changemaking.

Twenty-five percent of the Ashoka fellowship work on issues directly related to the health and well-being of young people, advancing powerful ideas and approaches aimed at giving agency to a generation of confident contributors in the world. They are transforming classrooms, playgrounds, neighborhoods, and communities. Individually, these leading social entrepreneurs command the foundational skills critical for success in the new strategic landscape. Collectively, they model and promote the how-to's for living in a changemaker world. However, more is needed to help society through this shift.

In recent years, Ashoka has devoted new resources and attention to carefully identifying, selecting, and col-

laborating with teams of educators in primary and secondary schools that are helping young people to develop the strategies and abilities needed for a changemaker world. In aspiration and practice, students are cultivated as active contributors.

The emergence of this worldwide network of Changemaker Schools offers a model others can look to for prioritizing empathy and changemakers skills in student outcomes. The teams in these schools have demonstrated their ability and willingness to develop and test new ideas, rather than just follow established norms. Beyond their local focus, they are also global frame changers with the obvious commitment, influence, and reputation to persuade others to follow their lead.

Everyone A Changemaker™ is not an alternative model for success or a utopia to which we all should aspire – it is the new reality. We already live in a world that requires every person to understand the nature of how the world is changing and the new skills needed to navigate and lead. As this new reality comes into sharper focus, society will have important information on which to act.

The new learning framework will follow societal mindset shift. We will see evidence when principals, board members, and others in and around the education community know that the primary school's success or failure is based on children in the early grades grasping and practicing empathy. Cognitive empathy-based ethics will be elevated as a foundational skill on a level with reading and math.

Holding up a new lens on the world we are in will offer a better perspective to discern the qualities young people must have for success and to fully contribute. As this package of attributes becomes the benchmark for youth learning and parenting – having an innovative mind, a service heart, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a collaborative outlook – we will have transformative education that is aligned with the new societal landscape.

Henry De Sio
Ashoka

INTERVIEW
Ken Banks: Technology for social good

Your three businesses kiwanja. net, FrontlineSMS and Means of Exchange all use tech to help promote social development on the ground – what are the most innovative ways you have seen these employed?

FrontlineSMS and Means of Exchange are two of the projects that I've started under the 'kiwanja' umbrella (kiwanja. net is the organisation behind most of my work, and my online identity, so-to-speak). FrontlineSMS, which I stepped back from a couple of years ago after running it since its inception in 2005, has been used in many exciting and innovative ways.

To be honest, from the perspective of the individual users, every use is innovative, and every user is solving a very real problem of very real importance to the local communities being served. Because of that I couldn't single any out in particular, but I guess its use by Kubatana in Zimbabwe is worth a mention, since they were the first people to deploy the software, and its use in the 2007 Nigerian elections was critical in getting the platform noticed by the international community.

Means of Exchange was my first venture after stepping back from FrontlineSMS, and it is predominantly focused on how we use everyday technologies to reconnect people with local resources and each other. The first project of Means of Exchange was to organise London's first cash mob, which we carried out in a bookshop in Hackney, not far from the Olympics which were taking place at the time. (A cash mob is where people mobilise over social media, and then 'mob' a locally run or owned shop and agree to spend a certain amount of money while they're there. It helps raise awareness around the plight of local business, and the importance of supporting them). The event was a great success, and was reported in the Financial Times and a number of other national papers. Cash mobs are taking place around the UK every week now. I have a number of app ideas for Means of Exchange which I hope to work on soon.

Where are you based? And what is your main focus at the moment?

For the past three years I've been based out of St. Ives in Cambridgeshire, where

I have a small office above a supermarket on the high street. After years of travelling and living abroad, this is where I eventually settled after being

*Ken Banks has spent 25 years in social development with an emphasis on the role of new technology. This has included founding **FrontlineSMS** - which utilises Open Source software to transform any laptop into an SMS hub. And **Means of Exchange** which focuses on using technology to rebuild local communities. He has just released **The Rise of the Reluctant Innovator**, which compiles 10 diverse development stories and includes a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.*

offered my first piece of mobile phone-based consultancy at the end of 2002. Right now, in addition to continuing that consultancy work, I'm running a few projects of my own, carrying out an increasing number of speaking engagements, doing some mentoring and writing, and planning a new book as a follow-up to "The Rise of the Reluctant Innovator". I'm also planning my first conference, and am being pulled into a few interesting socially-focused businesses, but can't say much about any of that at the moment.

Did anything surprise you in collating the 10 stories of reluctant innovators for your book "The Rise of the Reluctant Innovator"?

The sheer determination of the people I was focusing on in the book continued to inspire, motivate and amaze me throughout the whole process. And they still do. None of them really had to tackle the problems that confronted them, and in many cases they stepped well outside their comfort zones for the greater good.

"The Rise..." felt like a book that needed to exist, and the stories it tells – of the very raw, challenging nature of social innovation work – needed to be told. I'm very happy with how it's been received, and very happy that a number of universities have picked up on it, and how much it resonates with younger readers who are hungry for these kinds of stories.

How did you select these individuals? Were there any stories you have to reject due to lack the space?

Basically this began life as a 600 word article for Wired Magazine on reluctant, unplanned, accidental innovation. The piece only featured two brief stories because of word count limitations, but I always felt there were more to be told. I approached a few people whose work I felt would be a good fit, and pushed out a call for contributors through my blog, and social media. I did receive more stories than I needed, but not many and, to be honest, the stories ended up self-selecting. We ended up with a nice split of five male and five female contributors, but on the downside we didn't get many from the developing world. I'd like to pull together another book some time focusing on African reluctant innovators, when I have time. There are definitely plenty of stories to be told there.

The full interview with Ken Banks can be found here: http://www.idgconnect.com/abstract/9306/ken-banks-interview-technology-social

GROWING STARTUPS FROM RURAL SCHOOLS IN KENYA

Since 2013 students in our 12 Sote ICT clubs have established and managed 28 training companies altogether. Thanks to the support of SlovakAid and know-how of teachers from Business Academy Levice, Pontis Foundation transferred the methodology of training firms to Kenya, as the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to apply this education method.

Students at 12 schools in Taita Taveta County meet every week in their training companies and simulate business with other such companies and students abroad. During a school year, students join competitions, create brochures, video adverts, blogs, business plans and accounting documents and prepare for a joint trade fair. They share their experience through Sote ICT pages on Facebook and SlideShare.

The youth unemployment is a global challenge. Sote ICT offers a scalable, non-intrusive and affordable way to nurture practical IT and business skills in secondary school students and directly link them with our newly opened Sote Hub. Once they graduate they can start their business or receive further career training. This is both more inclusive and cheaper than alternative efforts to create new innovative hybrid schools with the

Printed external hard drive from one of our 3D printers in Sote Hub

Innovation centre Sote Hub in Voi provides its members with training and personal mentorship in programming, entrepreneurship and technology development.

focus on STEM education. The Swahili word "sote" means everybody and describes our philosophy of inclusion and search for high social returns.

According to the UN, 77.9 per cent of workers in Kenya in 2014 were employed in the informal sector, and jobs for young people are scarce and fragile. The core purpose of Sote ICT is to nurture practical IT and business skills in young people from all backgrounds that will enable them to become qualified and responsible future employees or business owners who support sustainable development of their country. We focus on rural schools with none or limited technology exposure. Our added value is the ability to combine the concepts of student Sote ICT Clubs, training companies and international student cooperation. We provide con-

tinuous support to educators, students and graduates alike.

Sote Hub to mentor training firms and support graduates' startups

Our big dream came true in December 2015. Thanks to support of SlovakAid we opened Sote Hub in Voi town, to support our students, graduates and local youth. Since 2014 we have had a full time manager for training firms who was responsible for improvement of their performance and activities. In 2015 we started partnering in know-how transfer, workshops and member exchanges with iHub, the oldest startup hub in Africa, and SwahiliBox from Mombasa. Their experts organized specialized workshops at schools and judged student training companies during our trade

fair. The winners of our competitions visited iHub in Nairobi.

By opening of Sote Hub in Voi we have also acquired an office and a training venue for our students, graduates and a broader public. Now we organize regular trips of training companies to Sote Hub. Our core team based in Voi has grown in number. We have hired a community outreach manager and Sote Hub manager. Together with training firms' manager, now we have four people who regularly visit schools during Sote ICT Club meetings or train students and graduates at Sote Hub.

Our members at Sote Hub started two coding education peer groups. Sote Tech Queens is uniting our female members with local university students to pursue weekly coding workshops. The Coding Club is the
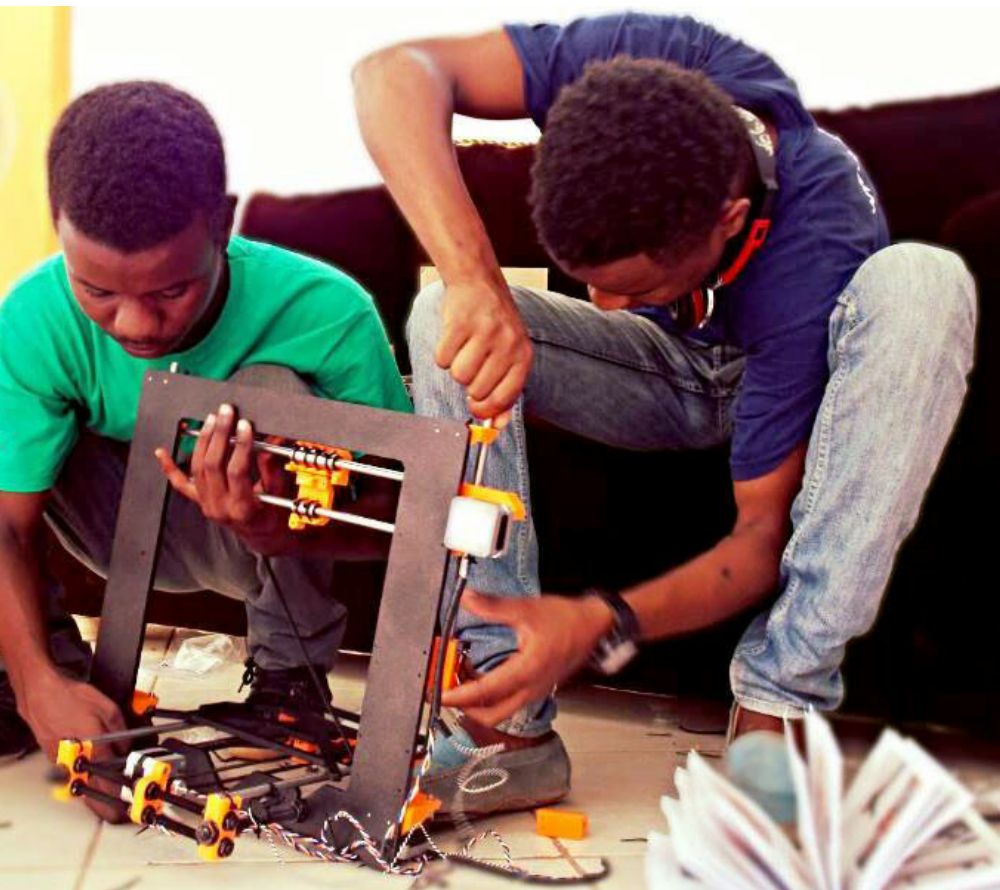
Construction of a 3D printer at the Sote Hub

second such activity. We also organize regular trainings and study visits for students from 12 schools in our Sote ICT program and for the broader public. We have three 3D printers and continuously develop our digital fabrication and tinkering program. We also plan to spin off 5 companies this year, which will get beyond prototype stage. So far our two graduates created a company with outside customers that is on track to become an innovative advertising agency – Rogim Designers.

Six years of growth and our future plans

Sote ICT is based on 4 consecutive projects of Slovak-Kenyan Cooperation for Modern Schools that SlovakAid has funded since 2009. The program expanded to 5 schools in 2012 and 10 schools in 2013. In the same year we introduced the concept of training companies. In 2015 we had 12 enrolled schools and opened Sote Hub in Voi town. Pontis Foundation and our partners, Kasigau Wildlife Trust, have managed the program for six years and we are in the process of registering the Sote ICT as a spin-off NGO and Sote ICT Limited as social business.

In the pursuit of our growth strategy we partner with two local universities and Biashara Center supported by local Taita Taveta County government. We want to spread the practice enter-

prise methodology to other secondary schools, university and polytechnics students and use it also to train their graduates. There are two other neighboring counties with Biashara Centers where we want to spread our "full stack" model of growing startups from rural schools through practice enterprises methodology.

We also want to deepen our cooperation with iHub in Nairobi and SwahiliBox in Mombasa. Through these startup hubs we want to spread the practice enterprise methodology and enroll students in other counties without the big investments in ICT infrastructure that were required in the current 12 schools in our "full stack" program.

The Disrupt Africa magazine described Sote Hub as a new niche type of a startup hub, that aims at inclusiveness, and focuses on rural and small town communities. We believe that this philosophy can bear fruit because with training firms at our IT clubs students can narrow the skill gap compared to their urban peers. At the Sote Hub they can build on those skills further before they join a university, find employment or start their own companies.

We believe our model of Sote Hub and growing startups from secondary schools has a great potential to scale in Kenya and beyond as it helps to solve the shortage of technical skills and represents a very practical and effective way of how to educate young people for the needs of industry in the 21st century.

Jakub Šimek
Pontis Foundation