

Charlie Crisp – Madanyu, India, 2016

The purpose of my trip to India was to run the first trials of a project aiming to combine computer literacy and music education through the use of ukuleles and the Raspberry Pi computers. This project was developed by myself in collaboration with the Cambridge-based social enterprise 'Madanyu' and the Indian NGO 'Agastya'.

The first run of the project ran over 6 days and was very successful – the children were aged between 10 and 12 and managed to learn basic chords on the ukulele. They also combined elements of their own culture with the culturally unfamiliar sound of the ukulele which was more successful with some groups of students than with others.

Throughout the course of the programme, the children learnt to use many OpenOffice programmes with ease and take photos using a webcam despite only having had experience with 'Paint' before. They were particularly taken with all of the preinstalled 'games' which helped them learn to type faster and to further their skills with English.

The latter part of the project was designed to bring together the musical aspects of the programme with the computer parts by getting the children to record and edit their own songs. Unfortunately, there were some time problems which were not helped by limited access to recording equipment and so this part of the programme was more difficult. The children were able to record and listen back to their songs but they did not gain any experience in editing.

The second run of the project only lasted 4 days due to a national holiday which happened on the first day of the week and the fact that the school was closed on Saturdays. Although the programme was completed over a much shorter period of time, the children were older – around 14 years old – and so picked up material much quicker. We were able to teach them just as much as the previous group of children although we still ran into issues with the recording equipment as in the previous week.

The reason for using music as a way of teaching computer literacy was twofold - firstly to create a lively, alternative environment to bring the children out of the classroom atmosphere and secondly to allow the children to see the use of computers in the subjects they already study (music) and beyond just number crunching and spreadsheets. The first of these reasons turned out to be really useful tool, with many children commenting on how they had a fun time. When the children were asked about what they had learnt, many of them came up with the initial learning objectives of the programme without being prompted. Due to the complications with recording equipment, I don't believe the second objective was fully successful but this programme was designed to be sustainable and so from this point onwards I will be looking into what recording equipment can be purchased cheaply and used easily for future generations of the project.

Overall, considering the fact that this was a first run of a project, which to my knowledge is entirely unique, I believe that it has been a huge success. I have learnt many lessons which will help me take this project to the next level so it can become an extremely useful tool for improving computer literacy all over the world.