

B-5. GAMEON!: DEVELOPING HEALTH GAMES

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In September 2010, Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen (the Netherlands) started a 20-week international program titled *GameOn!*. The object of this program is to have students develop serious games, that aim to help children become aware of social or health related issues.

Since the start of *GameOn!* students worked on three different projects.

1. In 2010-2011 the *GameOn!* program focused on children and disability. The main goal was to create awareness and acceptance of children with a disability among in-school children in South-Sudan. The client for this edition was War Child; a Dutch NGO that aims to help children in war affected areas.
2. In 2011-2012 the subject was Gender Relations. The primary objective of the game was to introduce topics of gender relations and choices around sexual behaviour. The game should be complementary to the War Child training program in Sri Lanka.
3. In 2012-2013 the assignment was to develop a game in the battle against malaria. The game would be a success if children were able to report signs of malaria clearly, identify malaria transmission methods, tell what times of the day mosquitoes bites occur, state cheap and effective ways of preventing malaria, understand the importance of going to the hospital and completing treatments. The client for this assignment was HelpHeal Organization in Kenya. In January 2013 the games were tested in Kenya by HelpHeal and team members from Hanze University. At three different primary schools, 26 children played the games and gave feedback. With this feedback the games were finalized and then shipped to the client. The games have been played at schools; preliminary results are very promising.

In collaboration with different clients and a university in Auckland (New Zealand) and Woodbury (Los Angeles, USA), students of *GameOn!* worked on the games. Specific knowledge about the region, domain knowledge, and target group was brought in by specialists.

The experiences in game development and production from these projects are the subject of the presentation and may contribute in developing more effective and adequate (social) health games.

1. The importance of a game development method that allows for regular testing, feedback moments and changes.
2. The importance of a user/player centred design: the context of playful experiences, including the player and his personal elements contribute to the game.
3. Cultural awareness in game design and development: consider and adapt to the values and beliefs of the target audience.
4. Collaboration with local people in game development adds to game acceptance.
5. A very positive attitude towards the use of computers in education in the targeted areas: "When *GameOn!* came along; I was to second guess on one thing now my kids wanted to engage in. (...). I was convicted of the appropriateness of a computer based game tackling any disease; more so malaria. (...). Nothing arouses primary interest of a Kenyan child living on the fringes of Lake Victoria more than an opportunity to play a computer game. It allows them the realization that computers are not complex electronic gadgets that only adults have access to" (G. Onyango).

In 2014 *GameOn!!* has set out to develop a game to help in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in the Nyanza region of Kenya.