One Laptop Per Child for Libya

The announcement came out around this time last year that MIT Media Lab Co-Founder and former Director Nicholas Negroponte and the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) organization were nearing a working prototype of a $100 laptop to get to more children around the world. The OLPC would help break down the digital divide by providing the poor with access to the tools of the digital age. Our post on the matter may have set the record for the most exclamation points used in any single post to date. For good reason, the idea is brilliant. It's a year later and the progress on the One Laptop Per Child initiative is still exclamation worthy! This week Libya announced that it will join the program and signed up for an order of 1.2 million computers at a total price tag of $250 million. If you do the math you'll find that to be a bit above the $100 – but it also includes support, installation, satellite internet access, and a server per school. It's a significant investment for Libya, but one that could allow them to outpace even the U.S. in the number of children who have computer and internet access.

Working prototypes have already been distributed amongst the OLPC task force. Test models, loaded with Linux, Wikipedia, and a human powered device for recharging the battery, should be distributed in November to deal makers in Libya, Argentina, Brazil, Thailand, and Nigeria – the countries who have all reached agreements with the OLPC initiative to receive units. The human power generation is no longer a hand crank on laptop itself but is part of the AC adaptor – hand cranks, foot pedals, and pulley systems are all being tested. Full scale production of the low-cost laptops is anticipated for Summer 2007. Though things like Clocky and collective dinnerware are wicked cool – Negroponte's initiative to bring technology to the poor world wide is nothing short of commendable. While it's unfortunate that he's left the employ of the Media Lab we're confident he's off to do the world well.

Working prototype of a $100 (well, $135 actually) laptop from Flickr user Pete Barr-Watson

Posted by jon petitt in News: World , Technology | Link | Comments (5) | Recommend this! (1) | [+]

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If you do the math, its way more than $100 - more like $208 and that's only for the hardware. What might the cost be for teacher training? In addition, countires have to buy a million units minimum.

What might that look like in other countires? I ran the numbers for Argentina, and they weren't pretty - one million 2B1 Children's Machines would be 1/2 of the non-salary education budget and only equip 10% of the student body.

[1] Posted by: wayan | October 13, 2006 9:12 AM

well - they have indicated that the units themselves will cost $135ish to start out with...but with larger production

the cost of that should drop to $100 or less.

and sure the project doesn't offer $100 laptops right now, but, um, does anyone else even come close to getting something like this off the ground?

[2] Posted by: jon | October 13, 2006 9:22 AM

I believe it's spelled "Libya", not "Lybia", Jon.

My understanding is that the power of these laptops is to allow children to learn with minimal facilitation from teachers -- there already aren't enough teachers to go around. Kids have an amazing ability to learn stuff on their own, as demonstrated by this case study of a computer installed in a wall in New Delhi.

Keep in mind, also, that the laptops are an investment, they should last 3 years (hopefully more! they're meant to be quite durable), so I think it's a mistake to compare these to a yearly budget.

[3] Posted by: Madeleine | October 13, 2006 12:06 PM

My link didn't seem to work, here it is without HTML tags:

http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/mar2000/nf00302b.htm

[4] Posted by: Madeleine | October 13, 2006 1:22 PM

Wow, that is really awesome! I love good stories like that. Cool looking computer too!

[5] Posted by: mrskin | October 14, 2006 12:49 PM

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