

## Brazil Ponders Joining the US\$ 100 Laptop for All Bandwagon

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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva appointed a work group to assess the possibility of Brazil's adhering to the project, "A Laptop for Each Child."

The proposal was presented to him by Nicholas Negroponte and Seymour Papert, scientists affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in the United States.

The group has 30 days to present suggestions on how this educational project, which proposes producing portable computers to sell for US\$ 100, could be put in practice in the country.

Negroponte and Papert originally presented the project at the World Economic Forum, in Davos (Switzerland), last year.

Since then, the Media Lab, the laboratory where they work, has been approached by around 50 countries interested in learning more about the project.

According to the researchers' calculations, a demand of at least five million laptops would be necessary for the price to come down to US\$ 100.

The MIT scientists proposed an ambitious goal to President Lula. They hope that, if Brazil participates in the project, all school age children attending public school, something on the order of 40 million children, will have laptops by 2010.

Negroponte submitted calculations showing how the minimum price of laptops sold in the United States, US\$ 800, is influenced by activities connected with marketing, sales, and distribution of profits.

"Half of the \$800 goes for these activities, and half of the remaining US\$ 400 is spent on the screen," he affirmed.

According to the researcher, MIT has developed technology capable of reducing the cost of the screen to US\$ 30.

"We can 'squeeze' the cost by using an open program of free software, such as Linux, and the price of the laptop would fall to US\$ 100, US\$ 130 with the cost of the screen. But we believe that it will not take much effort to reduce it even more," Negroponte wagers.

If Brazil decides to join the program, it will commit itself to distributing the equipment to schools for free.

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