

1 Million Linux- and Crank-Powered US\$ 100 Laptops Coming to Brazil

Contributed by Ana Paula Marra
Friday, 10 March 2006

The US\$ 100 laptop that is a brainchild of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) may be in Brazilian schools in 2007, says presidential aide, C ezar Alvarez, who is coordinating a work group that is studying the possibility of Brazil enrolling in the MIT project "A Laptop For Every Child."

In June of last year, Nicolas Negroponte of MIT met with president Luiz In acio Lula da Silva and presented the project. Negroponte is once again in Brazil this week to meet with the work group. According to Alvarez, "The Brazilian government has plans to buy one million of the US\$ 100 laptops next year."

The prototype of the US\$ 100 laptop was presented, in Tunis, Tunisia, November 16 of last year at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as the ideal solution for the digital inclusion of needy children in developing countries.

The goal of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Media Laboratory in the next few years is to make this equipment available in the six largest developing countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt, India, China, and Thailand).

According to the president and founder of the MIT Media Laboratory, Nicholas Negroponte, "this is an educational project that will help resolve the problem of digital division in the world." According to Negroponte, if the project turns out to be feasible, it will be offered to the other poor countries as well.

The US\$ 100 laptop, which is powered by a crank, battery, or electric current, is the size of a book and bright green in color - to please children and convey an environmental message.

MIT determined a minimum order of a million machines and payment in advance. Negroponte expects the initial lots to be ready for shipment by the end of 2006 or the beginning of 2007.

He pointed out that the product will not be available in stores. The idea is to sell it exclusively to Ministries of Education in countries committed to the "One Child, One Computer" project.

The president of the MIT Media Laboratory visited Brazil in July to present the project to president Luiz In acio Lula da Silva. According to Negroponte, Lula expressed great enthusiasm about the project.

The laptop developed by MIT can perform nearly all the same operations as a normal computer, except for storing large amounts of data. It was assembled to use free Linux software and access the Internet through a wireless device.

For people who don't have electricity or money to buy batteries, there is the option of the crank. A minute's winding provides at least 10 minutes of connection time to receive data.

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