

Is the OLPC project doomed to failure?

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The last few years have witnessed an increasing focus on creating inexpensive, affordable computers for users in the developing world.

At the forefront of this movement is Professor Nicholas Negroponte, founder and former director of the MIT Media Lab. His not-for-profit One Laptop per Child (OLPC) project has been developing a laptop (targeted at \$100 (£50) but currently struggling to break \$200) suitable for use by every child in the developing world. Recently, Intel joined the board of OLPC and will even contribute funding to the project.

As laudable as this dream is, the ideal unfortunately runs counter to a fundamental fact of life: a computer cannot exist independent of basic economic realities.

A computer is, rather, a creature of connectivity and collaboration. And, given the economic realities in the developing world, \$200 computers cannot generate the profit essential for the creation of a robust IT ecosystem.

[More Here](#) [2]

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