

Deathwatch: One Laptop Per Child

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One Laptop Per Child puts computers in the hands of the world's most vulnerable children to help educate them out of poverty. It's a noble cause championed by our brightest minds - but it doesn't seem to work.

The Basics

In the mid-2000s, faculty members from the MIT Media Research Lab set out to "to design, manufacture, and distribute laptops that are sufficiently inexpensive to provide every child in the world access to knowledge and modern forms of education." By 2006, the nonprofit One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) had created the XO, a rugged, low-power laptop with a number of innovative features, including ad hoc, peer-to-peer wireless networking, water-resistant keyboards and a solid-state hard drive. By running a Linux variant (highly customized for education) and a using unique, low-cost screen, OLPC was able to reduce the price of the XO to \$200 ? just within the reach of cash-strapped governments in developing nations.

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