OLPCorps: *London School of Economics, University of Tennessee, University of South Carolina*
Buea, Cameroon

<u>**Proposal**</u>

Introduction:

Team Buea, alongside Helps International, a non-profit IT NGO, propose the deployment and proper implementation of one hundred XO laptops, supporting equipment, and related resources in Buea, Cameroon – a small town in the Southwest corner of the country – during a volunteer summer school program. Participants of this program at the Bilingual Secondary School (BSC) will be selected on a first come basis with invitations extended in stages, starting with class one and continuing into class two, if necessary, until all available space is filled.

With one of the highest attendance rates in Africa, Cameroon maintains an enthusiastic attitude toward establishing ITC knowledge in their students. Communities, unfortunately, do not have the necessary equipment or properly trained teachers to support these ambitions. Our primary purpose is to both bring much needed ICT equipment and empower teachers and students with its applications.

Collaboration:

Participating from program seeding to pollination is Helps International (HINT). HINT, an exclusively local NGO, wants to improve the social and economic well-being of Cameroon's poor and under privileged through the use of information and communication technologies (www.hintonline.org). To bridge the digital gap, HINT is actively installing computers and hard-line internet access to primary and secondary schools in Beau. They also provide the necessary supporting equipment and personnel to train and support educators. HINT's local and technological knowledge make them a natural partner and eases the ownership transfer process. They have offered a school with existing internet access, housing at cost, logistical support, and to sustain the program after August.

Platform:

This team's goal is to nurture these seeds of ambition to bloom with technology by establishing and sustaining a valuable summer school program which meets three secondary objectives: substantively valuable for students, teachers, and their community; administratively feasible both in the short and long term; and is politically viable in the community.

These goals will be implemented through mechanisms (listed below) by the following schedule:

- Week 1: Arrival, prepare BSC for XO technology
- Week 2: Teacher seminars, refine school curriculum
- Week 3-4: Start of Program, introduction to technology and interactive classroom
- Week 4-8: Implement XO curriculum for students (hold bi-weekly meetings for parents)
- Week 9: Closing meetings with HINT, begin transition

Mechanisms for Enactment:

Creating **a substantively valuable program** is vital in both the short and long term. More than familiarizing teachers and students with XO technology, this requires showing users how to both integrate technology and shape it to fit local needs. To accomplish this, we will:

- Create the *Interactive Classroom (IC)* website:
    - An online blog for students to publish work, comment on other works, communicate with teachers/students, and share their OLPC experiences;
    - An online forum for teachers to discuss new techniques and projects with other educators, extend the classroom to students off-site, improve communication, and share OLPC experience;
    - A tool to increase community involvement and support, particularly for parents;
    - Links to other OLPC online tools.
- Use several short-term one/two week projects, such as researching subject trivia questions or creative art, to demonstrate practical application;
- Use online media to teach language, math, i.e., improve health practices, etc.
- Use sub groups to enhance instruction

To become sustainable this program must be **administratively feasible**. To that effect, we will:

- Train teachers and HINT staff on XO technology, manuals for future reference linked on IC;
- Streamline curriculum/XO integration to enhance curriculum;
- HINT staff will be present from the onset to ensure a streamlined ownership transfer.

Finally, establishing **political viability** protects the program from being publicly discounted and raises community involvement. Accomplishing that means:

- Using IC to catalog the ICT integration progress and raise awareness among local teachers, parents, community leaders;
- Inviting fellow community educators to the XO technology seminars;
- Inviting parents, educators, and local leaders to project presentations and the end of summer Team Buea results presentation;
- Establishing bi-weekly training seminars for interested parents, therefore raising awareness, increasing home participation, providing agents for helping students off-site.

Success and Hazards:

Program success will be determined by improved levels of ICT literacy rates, community activism, communication between teachers, and technology integration in the new school year. In the future IC should be integrated more broadly to connect students and teachers in Buea and greater Africa.

Some hazards to consider are protecting against a culture of dependency, and though English is the primary language, understanding local languages as well. The program design and partnering with HINT agents should safeguard against both of these.

Word Count: 750

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