Hello from Kigali!

Things are just slowing down here after the excitement and energy brought by the 30 OLPCorps teams who were in Kigali from June 8-17th for a two-week training--the first action of the OLPC Center for Laptops & Learning.

The workshop brought OLPCorps teams to five Rwandan schools with XO laptops; the following is a brief synopsis of each training:

**1. Rwamagana B Primary School:**

Rwamagana was the first school to receive XO laptops in Rwanda in 2007. The school is located an hour outside of Kigali and has a total of 750 XO laptops, 822 students (P1 does not have laptops), and 12 teachers. All students take their laptops home. Silvia Kist, of the OLPC Learning Team, along with Bryan Stuart, led training, with the support of 11 OLPCorps and 2 Rwanda Core Team Members.

The aim during these 2 days was to help the teachers to feel more comfortable with the laptop and also to bring ideas to the teachers of how the XO laptop can support language learning (this is important as Rwanda has recently changed the language of instruction from French to English). The aim for OLPCorps members was to experience an actual training at a school.

For the first day, all of the participants put themselves in the position of language learners: Teachers to learn more English, Corps members to learn Kinyarwanda and Rwanda Core Team to learn Portuguese.  To start, all participants took pictures of objects in the school/school yard and asked help from a native speaker to put the name in a learning language. After they put the pictures in Write and explored ideas, like to create sentences or write/tell stories with these pictures/words.  They also learned how to create their own memorize game with these images and words. Some teachers had never used Memorize. The excitement on their faces was visible! A brief introduction of Scratch also was made and the challenge was to create a dialogue using the learning language.

On the second day, teams were split to help the teachers to use the laptops inside of the classrooms.  Some classes worked to create their own Memorize game, others took pictures to and put them in Write, and others used Scratch. In a class we used the previous planning of the teacher (reading of dialogue between 3 characters in English) and proposed to create it using Scratch, taking advantage of resources like dialogue balloons and recorder voices, to synchronize the dialogues between the characters brought an extra challenge and motivation to students.

**2**. **Kagugu:**

Kagugu Primary School is known as the best public school in Rwanda. The school is located in Kigali and has a total of 3020 laptops and 3242 students (P1 students share laptops), and 47 teachers. The school has Internet access. Students do not currently take their laptops home. Julia Reynolds of the OLPC Learning Team, Epimaque TWAGIRIMANA Leader of the Rwanda Core Team, Core Team technical members Basil IRENE MASEVELIO, John-Marie NYIRINKWAYA, and 30 OLPCorps members conducted the training at Kagugu. Both days were focused on teachers. So all 47 teachers could participate, they were arranged into 3 different groups, each with 2 hour training sessions.

The first day, teachers were introduced to Scratch. It was their first time using Scratch because the laptops were just recently reflashed to a newer software build. After a basic introduction, teachers were asked to take a picture of any object or scenery in the school yard, and import this picture into Scratch and tell a story about the picture. The teachers, with the assistance of OLPCorps members, used sound, images and animation to tell their stories. At the end of the session, teachers shared their work with the larger group to supportive applause.

The second day, teachers sat with OLPCorps members in smaller groups and explored ways they could use the XO in the classroom. Both OLPCorps members and teachers were fantastic. Together, they explored ways to use Turtle Art, Memorize and Scratch for lessons. One teacher, who had not previously used the laptop in his class, decided he wanted to start right away and grabbed some OLPCorps members to assist him in his classroom.

Later in the day, the entire group had a chance to see a teacher, Simon, using the laptops in his classroom. After learning about Silvia’s work in Rwamagana, he asked the class to take a picture of an object in the school yard, import the picture into Write, and write the name of the image in English. The students seemed to thoroughly enjoy this exercise and by the end of the 1 hour and 30 minute class, all students were able to import their picture to Write and add text in English.

**3. Nonko:**

Nonko is located in Kigali in the Kanombe sector. There are a total of 937 students, 15 teachers with 855 laptops. Students originally took laptops home, but stopped due to some problems. For the moment, just P6 takes the laptops home while the schools is having conversations with the parents of kids in other grades. Parents are being asked to sign a contract to protect their children's laptops, and once this is done, the entire school can take the laptops home again. The students from this school are famously known as the users of Kigali International Airport, since they are a constant presence in the boarding area where they look for free Internet access.

Juliano Bittencourt, of the OLPC Learning Team, conducted the training at Nonko with 15 OLPCorps team's members and 17 school teachers. In order, to take advantage of so many native English speakers, what constitutes at the same time an opportunity and a challenge for the teachers, working over language was the focus of the activities. It is important to mention that learning English became an important issue for the teachers since the government decided to change the teaching from French to English last year in order to align with other East African countries.  So, the choose of the working theme was based on the needs of the teachers and not for the convenience of the OLPCorps team's.

The start activity was to pair an OLPCorps team member with one teacher. Both of them went outside the building and collected at least 10 pictures of objects. They named the pictures with their Kinyarwanda name and the correspondent translation in English. After that, based on the pictures, the whole group built a small Kinyarwanda - English dictionary. The interesting part of the work was the discussions regarding if the translations were correct or not, and about different ways of translating certain terms.

Another activity was called "Fantastic tale". The class was divided in groups of 5 pairs. Each pair went to scratch and got 3 random sprites. Based on the sprites, each pair needed to write a story in Write activity involving all the 3 sprites. After 5 minutes, the pairs rotated their laptops inside the group. When receiving a new laptop, the group was supposed to continue the story of their peers. After 5 rotations, they have to finish the story.

They also had some time to work over the doubts of the teachers, trying to solve the problems they were facing.

The next school day was dedicated to work with teachers and students. Each OLPCorps team member spent the morning working inside a teacher's classroom, helping them to implement different lessons. The activities proposed by the teachers were totally different. Ones continued their traditional classes and only used to XO's as note books. Other tried to do something different and used Activities such as Memorize and Wikipedia. One example was a math teacher that used Memorize in order that his students create subtraction games. Another teacher made a game making questions about Kigali while their students searched for the answers in the Wikipedia Activity. If by one side, these are initial activities that still don't take advantage of the full potential of the laptops, by other, are very interesting initial attempts of the teachers to integrate the XO in their teaching practice. In a country where textbooks are still a challenge, the XO provides for the teachers an important source of access to information even when not connected to the Internet.

**4. EPAK:**

EPAK is located in Kigali. The school has a total of 420 XO laptops, 350 were given by the government; another 70 laptops were given by international humanitarian organization, Right to Play (<http://www.righttoplay.com/>). There are 680 students and 15 teachers. So that each student at the school has access, students in the morning  session will share their laptop with students in the afternoon session. Laptops were first dispersed during the OLPCorps training.  15 OLPCorps members and Paul Commons, Reuben Caron, and David Cavallo of OLPC led the distribution and training sessions.  
  
On day 1, the team prepped by discussing a variety of issues which were likely to emerge, such as language barriers, how to address concerns of integrating the laptops into the curriculum, etc. Teams touched upon each issue individually and designed approaches based on this discussion.  For language, a majority of the translation was led by Kaçandre Bourdelais from Laval University.  However, during the individual training sessions, French speakers were assigned to a separate teacher to manage translation. The training provided mostly individual attention on programs that teachers wished to explore in more depth.  Teachers varied in the activities they explored, from Measure and Scratch to Turtle Art.  Later that afternoon, the same teachers were seen explaining what they had learned to their students and how they'll have the same opportunity the following week.  
  
Day 2 began by reflashing and NAND blasting several hundred laptops before distribution--only to find out halfway though that the image file was corrupt.  As a result, the majority of the morning was spent installing the latest build.  By lunch time, however, all EPAK's classes had laptops.  One particular lesson Corps teams took from this experience was the variety of teaching styles carried out in the classroom.  Some teachers, like P1, preferred more strict, instructional techniques, a few teachers valued individual exploration, and others attempted group work.  Unfortunately, unexpected power issues at the school forced us to stop by late afternoon.

**5. Kicukiro:**

Kicukiro Primary School is located in Kigali. There are a total of 3242 students, 44 teachers and 780 laptops. These laptops will be distributed after July holidays, so that each child has access, the Headmaster has decided that each classroom will have 20 laptops per classroom. The headmaster Felix says that "kids left their old schools to come here because they heard we would have laptops."

Pauline NYIRAHIRWA and Herve MUNYURANGERI of the Rwandan Core team and Brian Jordan of the OLPC Learning Team facilitated the two sessions at Kicukiro alongside 25 OLPCorps students. On Friday, the 44 teachers were introduced to Scratch for their first time. With descriptions and directions in Kinyarwanda by Pauline and Herve at the front of the room, the OLPCorps members roved around the room assisting teachers.

In discussion, language was found to be the main hurdle. In assisting teachers, it was found to be more effective to describe in words what to do, instead of physically doing an action for them. Near the midpoint of the session, Corps members noted that many teachers were still having trouble with the drag-and-drop action, and suggested that performing actions for the teachers instead of challenging the teachers to perform them on their own created a dependency on the facilitators.

On Monday, the second day for OLPCorps members at Kagugu, teachers were asked to teach a lesson using the laptop. With 5 classrooms full of semi-charged XOs and only 8 power strips, electricity was the show-stopping issue in the morning. Teams discussed a way forward, and consolidated the power strips to focus on working with one classroom. Pauline worked with a teacher to establish a lesson plan using the XO's Paint activity. Herve said the teacher found this to be beneficial. At the end of the session, some free time was given for students to try different activities on the laptop. Photos with the visitors using Record and exchanging English and Kinyarwanda words using Speak were favorites, and some Maze-racing occurred.

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The time in the schools was mutually beneficial for all involved: the

Rwandan core team was able to meet with enthusiastic, creative

students from around the globe; likewise, the OLPCorps teams were

given a real-world spectrum to their plans thanks to the Rwanda team;

teachers and students had individualized time with the Corps and OLPC

Learning Team to really delve into specific activities, especially

those that will be useful to them in their classes. Despite some

challenges that will be continuously faced, such as, power, language,

etc. the trainings went as well as we could have hoped or planned.

Many teachers commented that they were now able to see some new possibilities for

incorporating the XO into their class plans and many made the

commitment to use more, or to begin using in their classroom. We

realize that not everything will be learned in a 2-day, 2-week or even

2-month workshop, training is a long-term process. These trainings

will continue, most immediately, with the XO Camp that they Learning

Team will conduct with both teachers and students over their July

holiday.

We will be sure to keep you updated.

-OLPC Learning Team