PRESS RELEASE

OLPC is an education project, not a laptop project

One Laptop per Child (OLPC) is a worldwide project that the TRR (Telecommunication and Radiocommunication Regulator) is now consulting with the ministry of Education to implement it in Vanuatu.

On September 16th 2010, Prime Minister Edward Nipake Natapai committed the nation to a digital future, by announcing that Vanuatu will “establish a country programme of the innovative ‘XO laptop’ in schools in remote villages, starting from next year”.

The OLPC project targets primary school children year 1 to 6. TRR will support the ministry of Education in achieving the national vision ‘ICT for all’ (Information and communications technology). The main goal of OLPC is to improve the current literacy rate, self-empowering learning amongst the primary students and the motivation to learn more.

The OLPC project was first implemented in Vanuatu in July 2008 at the Wan Smol Bag (WSB) with the delivery of 25 XOs laptops that are currently being used in literacy classes. The government of Vanuatu through the ministry of Education is currently working on putting together a project to conduct an OLPC trial in Vanuatu.

TRR recently held meeting with teachers and senior officials for the Ministry of Education discussing the way forward on this project. Few of attendees raised their concerns about the use of laptop, its benefits and the disadvantages.

Discussions also took place between the Telecom Regulator, Alan Horne, Director of Education Roy Obed, Michael Hutak the Regional Director Oceania, OLPC foundation and Ian Thompson the SPC based OLPC Program Coordinator.

The way forward roadmap for the implementation of this project includes the project plan and setting trial goals, donor resource mobilisation, identifying trial schools in terms of connectivity and power, teacher training, launch training programs to promote XO usage including teachers and to also start digitizing textbooks and perform translation. The Ministry for Education through the Director General’s office is currently working on formulating the project plan.

Grass roots engagement is another step to educate population on program benefits and the XO functionality. Internet safety program should be established wherever the XO is deployed.

Pilot projects of the OLPC in the pacific include Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.