



PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF, One Laptop per Child, Google Launch Initiative to Preserve and Share Stories around the World

NEW YORK, 7 December 2007 – UNICEF, One Laptop per Child (OLPC) and Google today announced the launch of “Our Stories” (www.ourstories.org), a joint initiative to preserve and share the histories and identities of cultures around the world by making personal stories available online in many languages.

Using laptops, mobile phones and other recording devices, children will record, in their native languages, the stories of elders, family members and friends. These stories will be shared globally through the Our Stories website, where they can be found on a Google Map.

By making these stories accessible around the world, the Our Stories project hopes to contribute to a better understanding of our shared humanity across countries and cultures, across religious traditions, across languages, and across generations.

“Information technologies can help young people around the world learn more about each other,” said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman. “Our Stories will promote dialogue across borders and cultures and give young people a voice on a wide range of issues.”

Low-cost XO laptops by One Laptop per Child will serve as a foundation to help build this digital archive of personal stories by providing children in developing countries with easy-to-use technology to record their stories and interviews.

“One Laptop per Child is very excited about partnering with Google and UNICEF to capture the thoughts and feelings of children and their communities around the world,” said Walter Bender, President of Software and Content/COO, One Laptop per Child. “The XO laptop is a tool for sharing and collaboration and this project is a great way to build a global community.”

The Our Stories website will initially include stories collected by Brazil’s Museum of the Person and stories recorded for UNICEF by young people in Ghana, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Our Stories has taken inspiration from the StoryCorps® project in the United States founded by MacArthur Fellow Dave Isay. “StoryCorps is proud to lend its experience in recording the conversations of nearly 30,000 Americans to this global undertaking,” said Isay. “These efforts teach us that the lives of everyone – whether they are in New York or Nairobi – matter, and that they will not be forgotten.”

More stories from more countries will be added to the site every month in an effort to preserve an oral history of humanity in the 21st Century.

“Google as both a company and as a culture loves a good story,” said Elliot Schrage, Vice President of Global Communications and Public Affairs for Google. “We’re proud to support the Our Stories global initiative and we hope that this collaboration will not just encourage better storytelling but better listening to stories.”



Leading figures have already lent their voices to the project: Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, Queen of Jordan and UNICEF Eminent Advocate for Children, and Ishmael Beah, UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by War and best-selling author of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, have all recorded messages welcoming users to the site and encouraging them to share their stories.

Listen to a story today at www.ourstories.org.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information, visit www.unicef.org.

About One Laptop per Child

One Laptop per Child (OLPC at <http://www.laptop.org>) is a non-profit organization created by Nicholas Negroponte and others from the MIT Media Lab to design, manufacture and distribute laptop computers that are sufficiently inexpensive to provide every child in the world access to knowledge and modern forms of education. These XO laptops are rugged, open source, and so energy efficient that they can be powered by a child manually. Mesh networking gives many machines Internet access from one connection. The pricing goal is \$100.

About Google

Google's innovative search technologies connect millions of people around the world with information every day. Founded in 1998 by Stanford Ph.D. students Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Google today is a top Web property in all major global markets. Google's targeted advertising program provides businesses of all sizes with measurable results, while enhancing the overall Web experience for users. Google is headquartered in Silicon Valley with offices throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. For more information, visit www.google.com.

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