

The Australian Lapdesk Project

Australian High Commission, Abuja



Australian Lapdesks presented to students in a UNICEF displaced persons' camp in Brazzaville, Congo, July 2012

An estimated 95 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa have no access to a classroom desk when attending school.

The lapdesk is a simple, light, durable platform designed to give young children a place to write, and to support their teachers in making writing a central part of the curriculum. Lapdesks become a point of pride for students, and can easily be taken home in the evenings. It does not replace good school furniture, but it represents a cost-effective, durable, stop-gap solution for thousands of children studying in substandard conditions.

The Australian High Commission in Abuja, which is accredited to seven sub-Saharan countries, has commissioned Kommunity Desks to produce almost 4000 lapdesks to be distributed to schools of need in the Republic of Congo, Benin, Niger and Cameroon. This program is funded by our Direct Aid Program, a flexible small-scale grants program designed to target areas of need as they are identified by the High Commission. Each lapdesk is designed with maps, national anthems, and basic facts of Australia and the host country.

Australia's High Commissioner to Nigeria, Ian McConville, has presented lapdesks to students in Niger, Benin and the Republic of Congo, and will do so in Cameroon in October 2012. Working with World Vision and UNICEF, the High Commission has identified schools in need, and uses the presentation ceremonies to bring attention to the dearth of educational equipment in many African schools.

Mr McConville says 'this project is a drop in the ocean when compared to the need for good school equipment in these communities, but Australia is proud to be able to assist these students in getting a better start in life. We hope that this project will draw attention to the change that can be effected with a relatively simple idea.'



Australian Prime Minister's Special Envoy Bill Fisher, Niger President Mahamadou Issoufou, and Australia's Ambassador to Niger with residence in Abuja, Ian McConville, with an Australian lapdesk destined for the rural community of Say.