

HP's Kuppam: The Village that Turned Lucky!

Technology transcends geographical barriers. HP's initiative at Kuppam has proved that information technology can empower ordinary villagers, and help the young and bright among them to climb the economy ladder.

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A bright day ahead, the bus carried us over potholed roads to the constituency that is located at the junction of three states—Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. After a dry stretch of red soil, a large billboard (of a finger pointed at you) suddenly emerges beside the road, proclaiming your entry into HP's i-community.

Kuppam, the village that is now an i-Community, is moving up from the poverty line rapidly, thanks to HP's benevolent gesture. In partnership with NGOs, state governments, individuals, trust funds and charities, an attempt to elevate the poorer and knowledge-starved

people in third world countries is being carried out by the company.

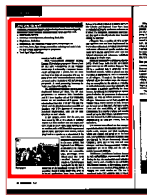
Schemes

The bounty of schemes initiated by Hewlett-Packard (HP) India Pvt Ltd to enable social as well as monetary development in Kuppam has given the community living here a new lease of life. A whopping two million dollars has been invested in this project, in partnership with NGOs, governments and individuals, trust funds and charities. A few of the plans that have been implemented by the company at Kuppam are listed here for you:

Computer literacy: HP has launched a scheme that educates unemployed youth about computers and basic data entry jobs at Kuppam. Both short and long-term courses that teach Photoshop, Microsoft Office, and other basic software are available. These are the necessary skills that will help the community gain leverage in the job market. Besides this, an ITES course is also taught on four systems. The students who have a higher level of computer competency and are comfortable with the basics, are given jobs that are outsourced from the major cities around. Datamation, a non-profit making company that works towards rural connectivity and bridging the digital divide in India, sources data entry and scanning jobs for the unemployed. The brighter students in Kuppam are also given important work like legal-form filling that has been outsourced from California! Currently, only Windows XP is the



Villagers working with the computer



Other projects by HP

The research, processes and specific solutions developed at each i-community, greatly help in setting up other projects in the underdeveloped regions around the world.

- East Palo Alto, California
- Dikhatole, a community outside Johannesburg, South Africa
- Mogalakwena, South Africa
- East Baltimore, Md.—“Entremos al Futuro”—the first bi-lingual digital hub
- São Paulo, Brazil—Digital Garage—this combines technology and music to help the youth develop job skills and better life perspectives
- Tribal Digital Village, San Diego.

operating system used.

ICDL—International Computer Driving Licence: This solution to computer-illiteracy from HP has been well-received by the Kuppam community. It is basically a computer licence, which certifies that a person has the basic working knowledge of computers and can be hired for that skill. To obtain the licence, students are tested on the hardware of PCs and the basic peripherals, in word processing, browsing the Web, using files and e-mails, etc.

The Mamidipudi Nagarjuna Social Welfare Residential School for Girls: The AP state government, the American India Foundation and HP have together set up this residential school on the outskirts of Kuppam. The infrastructure provided is at par with any city school, and the girls (who number over 750) are delighted with HP’s donation of computers. Solutions implemented here can be used elsewhere in rural schools.

A new concept, called ‘four for one’, has been tested by HP at this school. It basically implies that four monitors can run on just one CPU. There are four video cards installed on a P4 machine, with a 40GB hard disk capacity and 256 MB RAM. USB Telex P-500 sockets, used to plug-in either a speaker or a microphone at the



The Mobile Van

user’s desk, connect each of the four users separately to the main system. The keyboards have USB ports, so the absence of a floppy disk is not noticeable. Here, amazingly, Linux (Mandrake) has been installed instead of Windows. The lab is open throughout the day and is connected to the broadband network via Wi-Fi, providing almost 2 Mbps bandwidth. Over 30 software applications have been installed.

Science and subject-related open source software like Celestia and Keyboard Tutor have been downloaded off the Net to educate and entertain the kids. The computers, installed in June 2004, are also used to visually educate slow learners among the students.

e-Nuggets: This is another of HP’s on-the-spot solutions that has been implemented for the first time at Kuppam. e-Nuggets are a unique Web-based collection of specific modules that teach very specific application tasks with the help of animations and voiceovers, explaining the process in simple steps.

Centre for Information and Communication (CIC): World Corps India and HP have joined forces to set up the CIC model at Kuppam. The CIC is a computer that is connected to the broadband network, which is placed near the bus stand of Kothaindlu so that it is accessible to all villagers. Through it, the farmers are informed about the various crops, the diseases they are susceptible to, the solutions available, as well as informative preventive measures. HP has created a database specifically for these farmers, by indexing the information on various general websites, the government brochures and articles, as well as videos pertinent to the villagers. Information on the best practices for various crops, expert systems to help farmers get the most out of their land, the latest market rates and the availability of agriculture commodities from nearby markets and *mandis* are all put up on the website. An entrepreneur, who has invested Rs 15,000 in the centre, earns approximately Rs 1000 per month, from its operations.

The main services offered are data storage—especially for important documents such as SSLC marks cards, resumes and birth certificates, which are scanned and saved on to the hard disk, to be printed out whenever required (users are charged Rs 10 per document); Internet telephony; news off the Net; bus and train timings in real-time from government websites; horoscopes (Rs 30 to 200); and the sale of certain insurance schemes.

Mobile van: A mobile van has been donated by PES Medical College, in partnership with HP. During the day, the van doubles up as a medical health centre, and a facility to do soil-testing and chemical analysis. In the evenings, it serves as an entertainment channel. Using laptops, the villagers can watch movies, etc. The van is connected to the CICs using the 802.11 WLAN.