Rural Knowledge Network
powered by
partnerships
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The Rural Knowledge Network Program  
— Powered by Partnerships

Professor Kenneth Kenniston, Andrew Mellon Professor of Human Development, MIT, USA mentioned in an article that in August 2002 he searched for the phrase “digital divide” on Google and got 360,000 hits. The same search today yields 50,700,000 relevant pages! If one were to go by just these figures alone, it is not hard to imagine the kind of discussion, debate and speculation that surrounds the information and communication technologies for development (ICT for development) space today.

In the present scenario, ICT is seen as a tool that can be used to create an enabling environment for communities by facilitating access to information and essential services, providing opportunities through capacity building and training tools using ICT as an outreach platform to attempt to reduce frictional losses suffered by under-served communities in trying to meet their basic needs. These services include providing access to e-governance services such as birth and death certificates, tele-medicine services such as blood tests for diabetics, measuring blood pressure, temperature, basic eye-testing, education services such as tuition support and IT literacy.

One of the models for taking ICT to the common man has been through knowledge centers (or telecenters). A Knowledge Center is “a physical space that provides public access to ICT for educational, personal, social and economic development.”¹ The centers would provide multi-purpose services to communities such as education, health, e-governance and other services by facilitating access to information and essential services, providing opportunities through capacity building and training tools using ICT as outreach platforms.

The concept of knowledge centers has been in existence for some time now in India and various projects have tested the applicability of information technology and telecommunications to the solution of worrisome problems of development, with some having moved beyond the demonstration stage. They have however, mainly been set up by middle and large sized NGOs (M S Swaminathan Research Foundation’s Knowledge Center Project; DHAN Foundation’s Knowledge Center Project, gender-based projects of SEWA and Datamation Foundation), corporates (ITC’s e-chaupal) and government bodies (Gyandoot, Bhoomi, eSewa and Lok Mitra, and Community Information Centers in the Northeast); and projects like TARAhaat, Dhristee and N-logue that have been set up as social enterprises. Such facilities can empower the inhabitants of the area to acquire the life skills and knowledge they need to take advantage of the growing range of economic opportunities in the modern economy and create livelihoods that are sustainable. However, smaller grassroots organizations are unable to start ICT projects with any great degree of success - most attempts have found it difficult to scale up and grow beyond the pilot-proof-of-concept stage. This has been primarily due to lack of resources (human, financial, technological) to develop a sustainable model which is a must for a robust network.

The first initiative by NASSCOM Foundation (NF) to corroborate how cost-effective technology-based interventions could support social initiatives and stimulate economic growth was to partner with UNDP in Orissa to revitalize the knowledge centers set-up after the Orissa Super Cyclone. These 15 centers worked as a demonstration and helped refine the community based model that NF has since created. NF is a trust registered under the Indian Trust Act 1882 with the vision to harness information and communication technologies to transform lives of the underserved. NF represents the commitment of the IT industry to leveraging IT for empowering and serving the under served.

NF’s Demonstration Project
UNDP Orissa initiated the Knowledge Center project in the post cyclone relief and reconstruction phase by building and facilitating use of databases
on disaster damages, needs and gap analysis. These databases were effectively used by the Government to coordinate with various agencies working in this phase to appropriately target the resources flowing in. The Knowledge Centers were set-up in partnership with different departments of the Government and were hosted by Women SHGs, Panchayats, NGOs, CBOs and Youth Clubs. In the reconstruction phase the computers were handed over to the Block and Gram Panchayats to function as Block Disaster Management Information Centers and Gram Panchayat Disaster Management Information Centers respectively. Over time the lack of fresh products and reduced interaction with the local government resulted in the stagnation of the centers.

The NF–UNDP alliance, starting in March 2005, breathed fresh life to these centers by providing new hardware; training in business model development and Knowledge Center management, fundamentals of IT and behavioral change communication; and support from District IT societies.
NF–UNDP Project Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INPUTS</th>
<th>Budget, technical support, staff, consultants, computers and ICT infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>Mobilization, training and capacity building, evolving village level institutions, content creation, developing contractual arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTPUTS</td>
<td>Number of ICT centers established, number of people trained, number of institutional arrangements including linkages and networking, number of contents created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOME</td>
<td>Changes in employment and income, more credit flow from formal sector, new enterprises, more involvement of women and other marginalized section in decision making, more people responding and utilizing various government programs, government, corporate sector and other sectors like banks evolving policies and programs keeping UNDP-NASSCOM project as a reference point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT</td>
<td>Livelihood security, Improvement in the quality of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: From K.Balasubramanian’s study for UNDP (Nov-Dec 2005)*

Lessons from Orissa

From K. Balasubramanian’s study for UNDP (Nov-Dec 2005)\(^2\), it is clear that the project has been able to involve grassroots organizations and forge strong linkages with district and local level administration. The participating communities are aware about the Knowledge Centers and this awareness has raised the expectations of the community regarding fulfilling their livelihood needs and reducing the social and economic transactions costs. Financial, institutional and social stability checks revealed that:

- Connectivity is critical to the success of the Knowledge Center—the basic aim of bridging the digital divide using ICTs is not served without connectivity, i.e. “*horizontal and vertical transfer of knowledge cannot be realized*”.

- Community-based organizations that have contextualized the Knowledge Center vis-à-vis, livelihood related activities proved to be more sustainable.

- It is necessary to integrate the Knowledge Center with the local community and the local and district administration.

• Enabling Knowledge Centers to become financially robust requires a critical mass of village centers to be networked, exchanging information, generating knowledge and transferring technologies.

• Relevant content, which includes applications, services and products at affordable prices, must be made available.

• The relevance of content must be determined through needs analysis and mapping of the local community.

• Regular training for Knowledge Center staff is necessary to upgrade their skills.

Given this scenario, NF decided to set up its own initiative, one that is community based, but which will answer questions of availability and affordability of relevant content, and have a concrete road map to financial, social and institutional stability.
The Rural Knowledge Network Program

NF’s community-centric initiative is designed to engage industry, civil society, and governments in synergistic interventions through partnership. Called the Rural Knowledge Network (RKN), it is envisaged as an independent, **disaggregated model** with the contribution made by every partner (Resource, Implementation, Connectivity and NF) being vital to the Network. NF’s multifaceted program leverages on the power of partnerships and brings together donors, content providers and implementing agencies, thus enabling grassroots organizations to start successful ICT projects. The design puts the needs of the community that the Knowledge Center serves first and is therefore implemented using a bottom-up, non-prescriptive approach.

![Fig 1: Disaggregated Model](image)

Significant features of the Program include:

- Identify and forge partnerships across industry, institutions, government and civil society for providing connectivity, content and services, and for the implementation of the RKN.

- Establish, revitalize and foster a national grid of over 100 rural Knowledge Centers in over 65 districts across 10 states.
• Develop synergies from complementary skills, knowledge and experience across all NF partners and promote cross-fertilization of ideas across the Network.

• Provide more cost-effective delivery mechanisms for knowledge and/or services closer to end-users, especially those living in hard-to-reach areas of rural India.

• Strengthen local human resource, talent and leadership in order to deliver livelihoods to the hitherto underserved areas.

• Create opportunities to develop more culturally and socially sensitive content.

• Engage the community with the center so as to make it financially and institutionally sustainable.

• Channelize the IT Industry’s talent pool to develop innovative and challenging IT products that will serve the rural sector overcoming barriers such as language, connectivity issues and disabilities.

The RKN program began in earnest in August 2005 with the identification of Implementation and Resource Partners. Implementation Partners were carefully chosen on the basis of prior work and presence on the field. In the case of Resource Partners it was important that they understood the vision of the Network and the importance of sharing knowledge across it. Resource Partners like NASSCOM, Xansa, Microsoft Unlimited Potential and HP have committed to funding a large part of this program. Microsoft, one of the first donors for this program, is also providing software upgrades for 65 centers along with the Unlimited Potential courseware. Resource Partners like Qualcomm and Tata Tele Services Ltd. have provided free connectivity for 100 centers. Implementation partners will carry out the essential function of setting up of a Knowledge Center with support from NF for the first couple of years, and on their own thereafter. Implementation Partners provide one-time infrastructure to set-up the Center—this is one of the most important elements of the program. This pooling of ideas, technologies and products ensure a vibrant Knowledge Center.
The core of NF’s RKN program consists of providing connectivity and content to people in the rural districts across India in a form that is accessible to all, whatever their location, economic status (capacity to pay), or level of literacy. The first phase of the program (2006-2008) is spread across 10 Indian states. A wide variety of indices were kept in mind during the process of location identification like human development indices, gender indices, availability of infrastructure, existence of similar projects in the area and presence of implementation partners. Great effort was taken to ensure that the locations reflected a healthy mix ranging from the poorer areas to economically established districts.
The Knowledge Center

On-ground experiences and activities helped define what makes a Knowledge Center successful and sustainable. The Knowledge Center (KC) is designed as a decentralized center run by NGOs, civil society organizations and small entrepreneurs, who see a commercial motivation to own, deploy and grow the solution. Knowledge Centers are usually Internet enabled and consist of 2-3 computers, a printer, scanner and a web cam.

The Centers provide multiple services to communities such as education, health, and livelihood support, providing opportunities through capacity building and training tools. The Knowledge Centers aim to primarily engage the children, youth and women in their surrounding areas to significantly impact human development and gender indices.

Each Knowledge Center is envisaged as a community center that is operated by local people. The Knowledge Centers inherently serve multi-purpose goals as the community they serve has diverse needs. Some of the popular services offered are:

- Education: IT courses, distance learning courses, vocational training, life skills
- Information related to agriculture, government schemes, weather, market prices, disaster preparedness
- Communication facilities such as text and voice mail, fax, telephone, voice and video chat, courier services
- Collection and distribution point for farm and other agricultural products
- Payment of Utilities/Bills
- Reservation of bus and train tickets
- Miscellaneous: photocopy, photo studio (digital camera/web camera), lamination, desktop publishing (DTP)
This Knowledge Center run in the School in Mambakkam, a couple of hours drive from Chennai, is buzzing with the sound of excited school children. The source of their excitement – the new and colorful computer laboratory in their school. Although located within the school premises, the Center is open to the local community. Children of the school are free to use the Lab both within and after school hours.

Implementation Partners

NF has identified several Implementation Partners who have agreed to put in the hardware and peripheral devices to set up Knowledge Centers as a part of their contribution to the partnership. Today, Partners include Ambuja Cement Foundation, Byrraju Foundation, Forum for Integrated Development & Research, Grameen Sanchar Society, GTL Foundation, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Population First, SEWA, Students Partnership Worldwide–India Project Trust, Sanskriti Samvardhan Mandal, Suraj Foundation and Technology For The People, Pathways, South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies.

Alliances were forged with partners who:

- Have strong presence at the grassroots level
- Have preferably worked across sectors. Weightage was given for experience with setting up SHG’s, women’s empowerment, agri-related activities, health and education
- Would be able to expand their own activities using ICT
- Should be able to provide one-time infrastructure (hardware and premises)
- Believed in the concept, were self-motivated and had an attitude of service
Anita and Sunil Jadhav, Satara, Maharashtra

Agri-entrepreneur Sunil bought a computer with his savings and used it to expand his business. He set up a farmers club where agri-information is shared both via the computer and by agri-experts. who give talks. Club members also sell their produce through his stall prominently located on the highway. Sunil began the Center with the help and support of Suraj Foundation. Today, his sister Anita has taken his vision forward to involve the women and children. Anita has a Diploma in IT but needed NF's motivational training to help give impetus to her dream – where the women of the village, will like her, walk proudly knowing their competence extends beyond home and hearth.

In addition to grants, NF has provided Implementation Partners with the flexibility of working in any of the following three ways:

a. **Type I: Greenfield Model**

Implementation Partners own and manage Knowledge Centers themselves, for example, as with Ambuja Cement Foundation in Chandrapur, Maharashtra. These Internet-enabled centers are generally small with either one or two computers, a printer. Partners in this model have no previous experience in ICT and these centers function as testing beds, allowing Partners to strengthen their capacities while building further alliances at the grassroots level. NF’s support includes handholding on technology, locally relevant content and training focused towards entrepreneurship development.

b. **Type II: Early Innovators Model**

Implementation Partners forge alliances at local level such as with Panchayats, agri-entrepreneurs, SHGs and youth clubs. Responsibilities of the Implementation Partner includes building capacities, providing technical assistance to the local level partners, forging alliances with
the local and state government, and overseeing the management and trouble-shooting on a day-to-day basis. NF’s support is limited to providing locally relevant content and training focused towards entrepreneurship development. In addition, innovative solutions are generally tested at these centers.

c. **Type III: Veterans Model**

Implementation Partners under this category are established organizations with prior ICT experience. NF helps set-up and revitalize their centers by providing grants, locally relevant content and training.

NF’s aims is to build the capacities of Greenfield Partners to gradually move towards the Early Innovators model.

Montu Islam is one of GRASSO’s dedicated center coordinators. Full of energy and enthusiasm, Montu-da organized the biggest ICICI mobile banking and insurance road show which was attended by over 4000 people. His center is vibrant and buzzing with young blood and has one of the highest student populations across the Network. Montu-da’s carefully kept records help him keep in touch with his students well after they have completed their courses, and ensure they keep coming back. The secret of his success are his organizational and managerial skills.

Montu Islam in a training session
NF-GRASSO Knowledge Center, Murshidabad, West Bengal
## Extent of Rural Knowledge Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>PARTNER</th>
<th>KC</th>
<th>LOCATED IN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPE I</strong></td>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>Rotary Club</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Community centre in urban slum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Students Partnership Worldwide - India Project Trust</td>
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<td>Schools and community centers in villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Pathway India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private premises in village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Ambuja Cement Foundation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private premises close to village market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Population First</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Public Health Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Sanskriti Samvardhan Mandal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private premises close to village market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type II</strong></td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Suraj Foundation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Private premises on the outskirts of district and block towns</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Suraj Foundation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Private premises on the outskirts of district and block towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>Suraj Foundation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private premises on the outskirts of district and block towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Technology for The People</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Private premises on the outskirts of district and block towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Technology for The People</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Private premises on the outskirts of district and block towns</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>SEWA</td>
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<td>Community centre in urban slum and villages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>To be decided</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>SIFFS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Community centers in villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type III</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Byrraju Foundation</td>
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<td>Private premises close to village market</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>M S Swaminathan Research Foundation</td>
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<td>Community centers in villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NF’s Knowledge Centers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: As of November 2006, 70 Knowledge Centers are functioning. The rest are in the process of being set-up.
Resource Partners

NF has identified and tied up with leading organizations, recognizing that there is a need for strong partnerships for providing information and services of value to rural populations. The focus of the partnerships is to scale-up and localize the available products and services with these partners thus ensuring:

- controlled development costs
- wider reach of products of global standards

Modules deployed in Knowledge Centers at this time are:

The **Computer Aided Learning Program (CALP)** set up by the Azim Premji Foundation creates an environment, where learning and assessment is fun and opportunities to learn are equitable among rural and urban children. The CALP is primarily introduced in rural government elementary schools covering the classes 1 to 8 to attract and retain children. The Program focuses on enhancing the quality of learning by making it self-paced and non-threatening, and facilitates peer-learning. Azim Premji Foundation provides the multimedia interactive educational CDs, master teacher training, monitoring assistance and inputs to teachers for integration of content with the normal classroom. This program is available across the RKN.

**Microsoft Unlimited Potential (UP)** is a global initiative that focuses on improving lifelong learning for underserved young people and adults by providing technology skills through community-based technology learning centers (CTLs). Microsoft believes that
by providing technical skills training to underserved individuals, they can partner to create social and economic opportunities that can change peoples’ lives and transform communities. The program supports non-profit organizations through donations of cash, software, the UP IT skills training curriculum and technical expertise for providing basic computer literacy skills which can help individuals to learn about technology and gain the IT skills needed for employment. This program is available across the RKN.

**it-rural.com**, promoted by a team of software engineers, is an Internet Technology based commercially viable comprehensive web system that could improve rural GDP, increase earning per capita making rural life pleasurable. Reliable, three-dimensional, updateable, database is the vital input to the chain of rural development lifecycle. As a resource partner of NF, it-rural.com is in the process of building databases such as for training personnel, data collection, providing software applications for data entry and data manipulation. The net-enabled database consists of base data that has environmental, residential, personal, professional details (village-wise) and transaction data that track the day-to-day activities at the Panchayat level (Revenue, Welfare). This program is being made available across the RKN.

**Sisu Samrakshak (SSK)** is an ICT initiative by UNICEF, Hyderabad Field Office. An ICT initiative in multiple regional languages, it imparts knowledge to illiterate communities on health, hygiene and sanitation using audio and culturally appropriate images. SSK is about information dissemination and services for women and children. It addresses mothers as primary care-takers, but allows for
community learning facilitated by key players such as government front-line functionaries of health, nutrition and education departments. Using regional language and picture-appropriate mediums, each of these themes is available as Graphic User Interface (GUI) with voice-over to help the viewer navigate to the desired information. NF and UNICEF have partnered to share the cost of translation for the SSK into 9 more languages.

Tata Consultancy Service’s **Community Based Functional Literacy** tool is designed to hasten Literacy Programs. It is in multimedia form and includes music, stories and pictures with attractive colors in puppet shows, all of which are very interesting for adult learners. It focuses on ‘Reading’ and aims that in 40-45 hours of learning, an adult learner would be able to read a newspaper at an average speed of 14-15 words per minute. During this process a number of people take to writing with a little guidance from their school-going children or literate people in their families or neighborhood. The CBFL is available in most states of the Network.

Media Lab Asia works on the paradigm of collaborative research in the task of developing technologies and solutions and bringing them to people. Media Lab Asia’s application development is focused on ICT for healthcare, education, livelihood generation including agriculture, empowerment of the disabled and providing rural connectivity. The **e-Sagu** project is an IT enabled personalized agro-advice being provided on regular basis to the farmers at their doorsteps for the corps of cotton, paddy, maize, chilli, castor, red gram, ground-nut and aquaculture. More than 5000 farmers in more than 30 villages in Andhra Pradesh have benefited from this advice in the pilot phase. This is an IIIT Hyderabad-MLA initiative and is being tested with NF’s implementation partner in Maharashtra.

Cause an Effect Foundation has been at the forefront of the poor and needy, working towards bringing about a qualitative change in the under privileged families.
The Foundation provides Trainings and Support Services for Sustainable development and in this regard, Seven **Livelihood Training modules** have been developed. These ICT based Training modules have been primarily developed in Telugu, while efforts are on to replicate them in seven other regional languages. While in general, these modules are meant to be used as individual modules to suit specific training needs they can also be used as a sequence.

The seven modules are Maintenance of Mechanized Boats, Vegetable Gardening, Fish Pickle/ Papad Making, Candle Making, Vermi Composting, Mushroom Cultivation, Organizational Skill Development of Women

The objective is to introduce systemic initiatives to address livelihood issues of marginalized communities through an institutional approach. Addressing livelihood issues in artisan and other youth & women’s clusters empowers them with knowledge, attitude and skills to enable them to augment their income by harnessing the power of ICT.

*Learning drawing skills at TFTP’s Knowledge Center*
*Old Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh*
NF’s Contribution to the Network

In the initial stages of the RKN program, the focus was on getting partners and setting up centers. Today NF is concentrating on building the capacities of each of its partners to run sustainable centers offering relevant services to the community. As part of NF’s inputs to the Network, a series of training programs was kicked off with a 15-day workshop for Knowledge Center coordinators in Mumbai in June this year. The program focused on equipping master trainers and prospective Knowledge Center coordinators of the above-mentioned organizations, with requisite knowledge and skills related to basic IT, entrepreneurship, marketing, communication and content, which help them to set up and run Knowledge Centers. Since then similar trainings have been held in Hyderabad and Bhubaneshwar.

The annual calendar of trainings, workshops, events and visits is worked out along with Implementation and Resource Partners. Additionally, comprehensive plans and targets for the year are drawn up to give direction to Knowledge Centers. Trainings are participatory exercises aimed at equipping master trainers from Implementation Partners with requisite skills necessary for (training) Knowledge Centre workers to set up and sustain a Knowledge Centre project, elements of community outreach, and training in some content modules that NF provides. Topics typically covered are:

- entrepreneurship skills
- leadership skills
- communication skills
- community needs analysis and outreach
- basic IT skills
- hardware maintenance
- content material

Hardware maintenance training for Knowledge Center Coordinators
Mumbai, Maharashtra
NF realises the importance of handholding and support during the initial days of the program and the role that monitoring and capacity building plays in the successful implementation of programs. Therefore the following structure has been created to provide support to the local NGOs to set up and run the centres.

Next Steps

NF’s current strategy is to continue to build alliances thereby expanding the inventory of products and services, to ensure that the Knowledge Center becomes profitable within the shortest possible time. During the two years of program intervention, focus will be on identifying physical infrastructure that could be used for setting up the KCs, training and capacity building of the centre staff and the local community, investing in alliances with local government bodies and civil society organisations. This, in terms of specific program outcomes, will yield:

- Setting up of 100+ knowledge centers in 10 states
- A trained cadre who would have received instruction on basic IT skills, maternal and child care, HIV / AIDS, livelihood / vocational training, etc., depending on local needs
For NF, it is crucial that the Network remains robust and for this to happen, the Knowledge Center must be financially, institutionally and socially stable. Sustainability, however, is a complex concept meaning different things to different organizations. In order to achieve financial sustainability one needs to achieve social and institutional sustainability as well. Therefore, the way forward for NF includes:

**Building organizational / institutional capacities:** For the knowledge center to become the hub for thought leadership, knowledge center coordinators and Implementation Partners have to become agents of change. Central to the Network becoming robust is the self-sustaining Knowledge Center. However, given that most NGOs are donor driven, NF will focus on building both individual and institutional capacities to make the Knowledge Center financially stable.

- Improved basic adult literacy levels, health and nutrition indicators, better utilisation of water resources and sanitation practices
- Empowered communities through better access to information leading to informed decision making
- Information and opportunities for livelihood support and alternative livelihoods
- A roadmap to sustainability for Knowledge Centers

Young Sheetal was convinced that the future lay in computers. So after completing school, he spent four hours a day traveling over kuchha roads to the nearest big town to do a computer course. He then convinced his father to mortgage their smallholding in Sagroli so that he could take a loan and start his own computer training institute. Sheetal has come a long way since then. Now at 21 he has repaid his loan and earned enough to start another center in a neighboring village. Now, he feels he needs to give back to his community and so set-up a knowledge center right next to his own institute in alliance with Sanskriti Samvardhan Mandal. While he is aware that this will be competition for him, but he is confidently forging ahead!

**Sheetal Joshi Nanded, Maharashtra**

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**Sheetal Joshi - the young entrepreneur (sitting)**  
**NF-SS Mandal Knowledge Center, Nanded, Maharashtra**
The setting up of a national **Content Consortium**: There are many initiatives that are in the business of creating content for rural India, some of whom have shown willingness to make their product available to the Network. The products are of global standard and NF aims to reach it to the grassroots through its many partners. Further, in order for content to be demand driven and area, culture, and time specific, contextualization and local language translations are crucial. This will be NF’s focus in the coming years.

Focusing on **Livelihood and Talent Development**: NF, over the next few years, will give attention to bridging the gap between education and employability quotient. To this effect, NF plans to make available aptitude tests, life skills enhancement programs and opportunities to hitherto underserved communities, especially differently-abled community.

Institutionalizing a **Revolving Fund for Knowledge Centers**: NF’s intervention has acted as a catalyst which will result in Implementation Partners setting up close to 400 centers. This is just the beginning. NF’s Revolving Fund will focus on providing loans for the setting-up of knowledge centers. The revenues from these centers would be ploughed back to the Fund within a defined period of time. This then would be available for the setting-up of other Centers.

Building **Virtual Social Capital**: Community-based ICT initiatives have often involved the establishment of a ‘virtual’ representation of that community to itself and the wider world. Alongside community locations providing access to the Internet and computer training, such websites have been seen as having the potential to make an important contribution to community regeneration by promoting local issues, re-establishing a sense of identity and promoting communication. NF plans to concentrate on encouraging Implementation Partners to set-up such community portals.

**SHG members enthusiastic about Knowledge Center**
Nanded, Maharashtra
Rural Knowledge Network - Powered by Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor Partner</th>
<th>Resource Partners</th>
<th>Connectivity Partners</th>
<th>Implementation Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GTL Limited</td>
<td>Azim Premji Foundation</td>
<td>Qualcomm</td>
<td>Ambuja Cement Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hewlett Packard</td>
<td>Cause an Effect Foundation</td>
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