

The number of Indian residents using the internet is set to increase to over 300 million by 2014

Yahoo India now offers email in eight Indian regional languages

17% of internet users in India are mobile-only users

Microsoft now supports 12 Indian Languages

Expanding internet access

Workshops educate students on the importance of open source learning

According to a recent BBC report, India has the third largest internet user base in the world behind China and the US. Analysts state that India needs to look beyond the use of English language to create online content and build new technology in order to educate the wider population. The report also suggests that the next phase of internet growth in India will come from users who are more comfortable with their local language. With over 30 major languages and 1500 dialects, India is a unique market.

The Kusuma Trust (The Trust) is addressing many of the points raised in the report by supporting the Centre for Internet and Society (CIS), which campaigns for greater access to the internet for all Indians. CIS recently organised an Odia¹ language Wikipedia workshop at the KMBB College of Engineering in Bhubaneswar. The purpose of the workshop was to educate students on the importance of open source technology and how they can contribute to sites such as Wikipedia² by updating information in their local language of Odia.

Dr Dhanada Mistra, Director of Academics at KMBB, opened the workshop by highlighting the importance of students taking part in and contributing to open source technology in local languages, such as Odia, and how everyone can contribute to Wikipedia. Students were invited to test the typing tool on the Odia Wikipedia website and a new article about the College was instantly created in Odia. The students have now shared contact details and have joined the Odia Wikipedia Facebook³ page that currently has over 1,600 members.

The popularity of the workshop demonstrated that more people want to get online and read and write online in Odia. As a result more workshops are planned for 2013. Although India is the third largest user base in the world, 92% of India's 1.2 billion population are currently unable to access the internet. The work of CIS will strive to increase access to online material in local dialects.

¹Odia is an Indian language and the official language of Odisha

²www.or.wikipedia.org

³www.facebook.com/groups/odiawiki



Participants at the Odia Wikipedia workshop at KMBB College of Engineering, Bhubaneswar. Photo: CIS

BioWorld Conference a great success

Kusuma School of Biological Sciences

On 10-12 December 2012 the Kusuma School of Biological Sciences (KSBS) hosted the BioWorld 2012 Conference with a focus on Proteins in Disease and Disorder. The conference commemorated the official inauguration of the laboratories at KSBS. The BioWorld conference provided the opportunity for India's brightest academics, experts and scientists to come together and share their work and research findings. Topics discussed over the three days included Science and Society - infectious diseases, neuroinflammatory diseases and adaptive evolution. Dr Balwant Singh, Chief Executive of The Trust, delivered a speech to the delegates highlighting the partnership between The Trust and the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi to establish the KSBS. In his opening remarks Dr Singh said "We are delighted to support such an innovative School in a setting such as the IIT, and we are encouraged with the pace at which teaching and research programmes have taken off at the school."



Dr Balwant Singh delivering his speech at BioWorld 2012. Photo: IITD

Science teaching improves in schools

Agranee Jana Kalyan Anusthan

In the Conducive Learning Environment and Facilities for Secondary Science Students project implemented by Agranee Jana Kalyan Anusthan, teachers have taken part in training programmes designed to improve their science teaching skills. Experiment tables and equipment supplied to schools have helped students learn through doing and ignited their interest in science subjects. The head teacher of Sumati Behara High School in Sambalpur, Mr. Sarjan Kumar Barpanda, is pleased with the results stating that there has been a marked improvement in the quality of science teaching and learning in the classroom. "The project has played a key role in developing Science in the school. It has boosted the spirit of our teachers and has engaged our students' interest in Science".

Students receive new uniforms

Vikash Vidyalaya Foundation

The Vikash Vidyalaya Foundation (VVF) purchased new uniforms, shoes and school bags for children residing at the Kusuma Seva residential home in Sambalpur, Odisha, with funding from The Trust. Kusuma Seva provides food, shelter, education and medical care to orphaned and semi-orphaned children as well as supporting their physical, mental and intellectual development.



Children at Kusuma Seva in their new uniforms. Photo: VVF

Report writing training for Probation Officers

Sadhana

A three day writing workshop was organised by Sadhana for probation officers from Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, on 13-15 December 2012. The workshop trained Officers in legal report writing and methods for collecting information from children in trouble with the law as part of the Saarathi project. The project aims to improve the counselling skills and understanding of legal issues for frontline personnel working with vulnerable children.

Participants shared their own experiences and reviewed case studies of children in care homes. The training helped with the writing of high quality legal reports that will be used in juvenile courts when dealing with children in difficult circumstances. The improved written reports will help courts to understand the backgrounds that the children come from and ensure more accurate decisions are made for their welfare and protection.

Workshops in prisons

Science Museum

In November 2012, The Trust awarded a grant to the Science Museum to provide life-enhancing science learning experiences. The project will engage with excluded groups in prison, over 600 school teachers whose main experience of science is determined by the National Curriculum and 3,960 students who will each be given the opportunity to attend a facilitated visit at the Museum.

On 14 December 2012 the Science Museum Learning Programme visited HM Prison and Young Persons Institute in Thamesmead, London. Science activities were carried out by facilitators for prisoners and their families during prison visits. Prisoners were able to interact with their children through science experiments including making 'slime' and learning about space and forces in order to make their own rockets. Feedback from prison staff, project participants and their families was very positive. One visiting mother said "It was a lot of fun. I would like to do something like this every time. I hate the visits usually, it is so hard with the kids. This was so good."