

New Nasscom programme to aid NGOs

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The programme, BiG Tech, is a partnership between NF and TechSoup, a San Francisco-based non-profit technology capacity building organisation.

'Nasscom and NF have been encouraging the IT industry to use ICT (information and communication technology), their core strength, for societal development through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities,' Nasscom president Kiran Karnik said at the launch function here during which he also inaugurated the website of Big Tech.

'The BiG Tech programme, launched today, is ideally suited to link such CSR activities,' he added.

The programme will be run in partnership with IT companies, which will act as donors by providing software and other applications to the civil society organisations.

Karnik said that a significant aspect about the use of IT by NGOs and other civil society bodies is not access to technology but the context in which the technology is used.

'For different NGOs and different issues, different applications are necessary. It is here that IT companies have to bear a lot of responsibility. We want more IT companies to partner us in running this programme,' he said.

Stating that NGOs are playing an increasingly important role in citizen welfare services, NF chairman Saurabh Srivastava said: 'Technology, in our flattened world, can help NGOs create regional, national and even global awareness about their activities. This heightened awareness can, in turn, lead to a rise in public attention, interest, and action on behalf of causes.

'One of the barriers to technology for NGOs is affordability of technology products. Big Tech is perfectly suited to address this issue of access to affordable technology, which is the most critical spoke in the wheel,' he said.

He said that NF has been working closely with NGOs for the last four years.

'Now, we are doing a rethink. In partnership with TechSoup, we can give NGOs products at nominal prices. We intend to expand Big Tech by getting more and more partners,' he said.

Stating that TechSoup was looking forward to the partnership with NF, TechSoup global director Mike Yeaton said: 'India is extremely important to this programme for several reasons. First and foremost, the opportunity to serve NGOs and civil society is immense. Second, we want to reach out and encourage India's booming IT industry to deliver new offerings to NGOs worldwide.

'Finally, we can partner together to deliver innovative ways to reach underserved communities at the grass-roots level, lessons which can be applied globally.'

Founded in 1987 as CompuMentor, TechSoup is a leading comprehensive non-profit technology assistance providers in the world, employing 150 people and deploying a budget of over \$18 million.

This partnership with NF is TechSoup's eighth such in as many as countries.

In 2006, TechSoup distributed 799,000 technology products worth \$207 million. Its donor partners include IT majors like Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Symantec, Adobe and Intuit.

In fiscal 2008, it aims to serve about 25 countries and distribute product donations with a fair market value of \$55 million in countries outside the US.

Explaining the basic concept of Big Tech, NF chief executive Rufina Fernandes said: 'This is basically an online resource service. NGOs can log onto our website and apply for aid. We will do a due diligence of the applicant and then help them. The whole process will take around two weeks.'

Vidya Poshak, an NGO working in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala for further education of poor and meritorious Class 10 pass-outs, has been chosen as the first beneficiary of the Big Tech programme.

R.N. Tikot, the chief executive and founder member of Vidya Poshak, received a complete Microsoft Office suite from Microsoft India managing director Neelam Dhawan at the function.

- *Indo Asian News Service*