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4

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Community move e-mpowers Bidadi's womenfolk

By Smitha Rao/TNN

Bangalore: Anita has never stepped out of the bylanes of Bidadi, neither had her sculptor husband Bhaskar until a month ago. He returned from London with supply orders for carving out Nandi statues to cater to In-dophiles. Thanks to Anita who had scoured the Net to check out the global market.

Some 200 women at Bidadi, these days, think themselves an empowered lot because of the commercial emancipation a computer can offer; thanks to a community-centric initiative. In 2000, an

NGO called Anchorage was established to expand and further leverage ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) for social empowerment. The scope of technology to enhance the small and medium companies was never better felt.

Under the project TelNek, women are working on coreldraw, designing websites of metro clients. So why a small town like Bidadi, a few kilometres from IT Capital Bangalore? Says Surbhi Sharma, Trustee, Anchorage: "Bidadi has proximity to a developed place but by itself has no access to infrastructure. The



SETTING A TREND: Women at Bidadi work on a project using their newly acquired software skills.

youth and other job-seekers had to go till Kengeri to even print CVs. The ICT premise is basically for newer tools to benefit people in rural areas, so we zeroed in on Bidadi."

Recently TelNek won the Asian Corporate Social Responsibility award, its other claim to fame was its delivery in local language adopting the suitable contextual form. Surbhi Sharma elucidates: "It makes no sense talking to Bidadi denizens about hilly terrain or seas in Spain which is what any easy-to-learn format teaches. The manner in which these people are being trained is

very culture-specific. They use the e-baraha script and work on projects that they relate to on an everyday basis."

When ration cards were being made electronic, the community worked on content for the website and are presently working on a website for an NGO working with issues of visually challenged. The trade-off has spawned minor triumphs. "At home I wasn't even allowed to switch on a TV, now when I talk about page-maker and MS-Office, the men look up to me," says a trainee. Yet another has started her own training centre.