

The enthusiasm and excitement is infectious—kids of all hues, sizes and gender are busy pouring over computer screens, clicking away at the mouse, working with mentors and thrashing out projects, burning CDs and tuning into Robotics! This is the scene at the Intel Computer Clubhouse at Jakkur whose activities have been integrated with CLT's Srujana where children from the adjoining government schools are drawn to the center every school day through various activities and mentoring programs.

Tucked away in the northern fringes of the city in Jakkur Village is 'Srujana,' a Creative Learning Center being run by an NGO—Children's Love Castles Trust (CLT). The Department of Education has given CLT about 9,000 sq. ft. of land in the premises of the Jakkur Government School which runs classes from 1-10 standards with approximately 850 children drawn from 10 neighboring villages.

CLT and Srujana are now playing host to a unique project—The Intel Computer Clubhouse which was inaugurated at Jakkur recently. This is an invention workshop for these village children—giving them access to high-tech equipment to help develop skills that encourage self-confidence and foster creativity.

Says Bhagya Rangachar, the executive director and founder trustee of CLT, "Nearly 100-150 children pass through the clubhouse each day which is open from 10am-6.30 pm six days a week. We work mostly through the mentor mode and currently there are 14 mentors and 5 CLT members overseeing the activities."

The emphasis is to give the children a "place" to develop learning skills and gain a sense of well-being which would give them the confidence to face challenges in their immediate environment. The programs are targeted at three broad groups.

In the mornings it is open to children who have dropped out of schooling and motivate them to continue their education. In the afternoons it gets in children from the Jakkur school while in the evening it is thrown open to unemployed youth. The age group extends from 10-22 yrs.

It is an open house, and, says Bhagya, "we encourage children to learn and help others." She introduces us to Chetan, who's in the 10th std at the village school, a whiz at hardware who recently came into the clubhouse and is now happily explaining the intricacies of a computer to other kids around him.

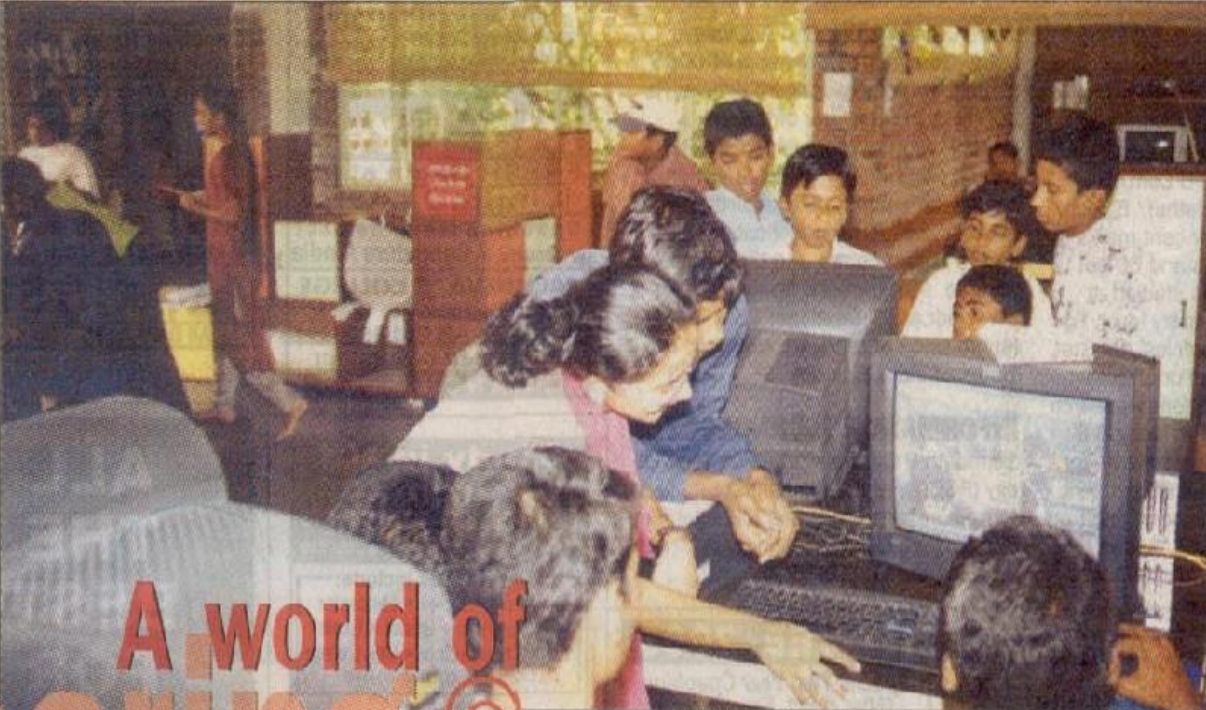
The Intel Foundation provided a three-year seed grant to develop the first Computer Clubhouse, now based at Boston's Museum of Science in Massachusetts, USA. The belief behind the project being that adolescents learn more effectively when engaged in designing and

creating projects rather than memorising facts or learning isolated skills, out of context. In partnership with MIT Media Lab, the Computer Clubhouse Network was established in 2000 with the aim of adding 100 every 5 years. So far 25 have been setup.

In India the first one was setup for slum children of Govindpuri, New Delhi in 2001 in association with the NGO Katha.

The Bangalore initiative has expanded to include women from the neighbouring villages also—with CLT keeping once a week slot for them aside. Hema Srinivasan drives the project every Wednesday. The plans are also to use the Clubhouse for community outreach programmes and extend it to village entrepreneurs.

It's a bustling, bubbling, optimistic world and it needs mentors. So if you feel you can change lives, contact Bhagya at bhagya@childrenslovecastles.org



A world of caring & computers

Intel joins forces with CLT to start a computer clubhouse for village children