

# i-community is inclusive, innovative

Winner – Corporate Award  
**Hewlett-Packard**

**Yolandi Groenewald**

Where will South Africa's next Mark

access to clean water and health-care. Literacy rates are below the national average, only 7% of schools have access to computers and vocational skills are scarce.

HP's emerging market solutions division partnered with the Limpopo





# HP i-Community

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Commerce and United Nations Development Programme, in recognition of its unique contribution to alleviating poverty and stimulating development, in line with the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

"The project is fundamentally about 'innovation everywhere' — in every aspect of the project, from its policies to its implementation, from

its technologies to its capacity-building techniques," says Clive Smith, HP's i-community project director.

"Its primary goal is to develop breakthrough models of sustainable social and economic development, through the use of ICT.

"In addition to establishing a computing and telecommunications infrastructure to enable

widespread community access, the project focuses on capacity building of many kinds — entrepreneurial training and venture creation, open source software, computer refurbishing and multimedia training, community engagement, delivery of government services and developing local solutions, where possible in local languages, to the challenges of rural development."

It is commonly presumed that ICT has the potential to bring enormous benefits to developing countries, through distance learning, e-mail, Internet research, telemedicine and agricultural training. Yet little has been achieved, despite thousands of projects around the globe.

Smith says HP recognised that the stand-alone "digital village", or telecentre access concept, popularised in many countries, had severe limitations. Simply placing ICT in rural areas without seeing the bigger picture of broader social and economic challenges offers little in terms of concrete, sustainable benefits.

HP therefore pioneered an alternative “inclusive community”, or “i-community”, model — where the government, private sector and civil society work together to boost regional development, using ICT as the key enabling tool.

Management of the project is handled by various steering committees overseeing project teams comprising representatives of the three key stakeholder partners, as well as third parties, Smith explains.

“The project has a holistic approach, which attempts to address and integrate many different areas, partners and solutions into a sustainable ecosystem,” says Smith.

Smith says community engagement, ICT infrastructure, economic development, cultural preservation, e-service delivery, innovative solutions for health-care in rural areas and education, training and capacity building are key pillars of the project.

The breakthrough models developed in Mogalakwena will now be replicated, first in the rest of the province, and then around the country and in other parts of Africa.

In addition to ICT training programmes, the project has been active in various areas of social engagement and skill development.

HP’s Mogalakwena community is fast developing into a truly collaborative partnership that can become a model for similar communities around the world.