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While the country waits for universal broadband to deliver quality education through the internet, here's an NGO that is physically distributing digital video content to expand the reach of quality education to underprivileged children. Says Urvashi Sahni, co-founder, Digital StudyHall (DSH): "We digitally record live classes by the best grass roots teachers on different subjects and distribute them on DVDs to schools in semi-urban and rural areas." Nothing hi-tech about it, but the fact is DSH is using technology innovatively to address a pressing problem. DSH, which started operating in July 2005, works on a hub-and-spoke model, where the resource-rich urban school in the hub records and dispatches DVDs every second day to the resource-poor village and slum schools (the spokes). Says Sahni, 53: "As of today, DSH runs hubs in four cities—Lucknow, Kolkata, Pune and Dhaka—covering approximately 30 schools and over 6,000 students across different areas in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Kolkata and Dhaka." Each spoke school is given at least a TV and a DVD player.

At last count, DSH had accumulated more than 550 recordings of lessons in English, maths, science, environment, Hindi, Marathi, and Bengali catering to students from standard I to VIII. "Deployment of DSH has not only helped students but also the teachers in rural schools to improve their knowledge," says Sahni, who co-founded DSH with Randy Wang, a friend and former colleague at UC Berkeley. With financial support from Microsoft Research, University of Washington and National Science Foundation, DSH expects to go places.

— Manu Kaushik

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