



National Council of Rural Institutes

Department of Higher Education

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# Connect

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# Redefining Rural Community Engagement

# Meeting the Expectations of Rural Communities is a Big Challenge: NCRI Chairman

The Tata Institute of Social Science's (TISS) 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation was held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at Tuljapur Campus, Maharashtra under the stewardship of Professor S. Parasuraman, Director TISS.

Congratulating the students in his convocation address, the Chief Guest Dr. W.G. Prasanna Kumar, Chairman, National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) said "It's a big challenge to go out and face the world as students of TISS, but we take the challenge firmly and very efficiently. We've had the excellent handholding support of the Institute till today and the world expects your handholding forever".

Kumar further said, "Many of you got selected for the big positions to be the leaders who face the challenges and also address those challenges which the present rural India is facing. It has been distressed for ages and it needs your support". He concluded by saying that it's a great honor to be a part of this ceremony.



## NCRI Joins Hands with UoH to Promote Rural Education

The National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Hyderabad (UoH) on May 31<sup>st</sup>. Both have agreed to cooperate in the broad areas of teaching-learning and research related aspects of rural India.



As per the MoU, NCRI will encourage the students and faculty of UoH to study rural India as part of their curriculum. It will support the doctoral research and other allied academic activities which focus on rural issues. In short, it will enable students and faculty to take up community engagement activities and research in rural areas.

The NCRI will assist the Anthropology Department of the university by making their curriculum vibrant in rural aspects. A rural interaction programme has been tailored by the NCRI and UoH for the five-year integrated students where the students will spend sometime in the village. The first batch of students to embark on this rural journey are from the School of Social Sciences.

The cooperation as currently envisaged is between NCRI and the University's School of Social Sciences, School of Economics, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication, and the School of Management Studies

Specific Activities will be taken up from time to time by various departments of UoH and NCRI on the basis of specific proposals which could emanate from the participating Schools/ Departments and the NCRI

# Problems Impede Education in Rangabelia



**R**angabelia, a remote village in Sunderban region of West Bengal, is plagued by various problems. From drinking water to poor health services, both the older and younger generations wade through many obstacles daily. Post-Aila cyclone in 2009, the roads have become danger-

ous to ply. This has dealt a serious blow to the literacy of Rangabelia.

Largely hindered by transportation problems, Rangabelia High School is one of the high schools in the village which has witnessed innumerable dropouts in the last five years. To reach the school, one has to ferry across the turbulent Gosaba river on ill-equipped, overcrowded boats. The weather is extremely unpredictable as the village is flood prone. Due to these risky factors, the Rangabelia youth are losing interest in education. Another problem that is impairing the development is the lack of opportunities. Given its remote-

ness, there aren't many ways to eke out a living in Rangabelia. Even after completing higher education, most are taking up professions which are completely unrelated to what they've studied.

All these factors are making the youth to have second thoughts about education. With the state of the educated or illiterate no different, Rangabelia's education system is staring at a bleak future. As it is often said that a stitch in time saves nine, it is important to better the village's deplorable condition before it worsens any further by increasing the access to education.

# Sachin Bats for Rural Development

**S**achin Tendulkar once said, "Don't stop chasing your dreams because dreams do come true". Having said, the God of cricket is now helping thousands of Puttamraju Kandriga villagers realise their dreams. The village is located in the Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh. Sachin is now taking the Gandhian values forward by developing the backward villages.

Sachin adopted this village under the *Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana* on November 2014. Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana was initiated to bring the members of parliament of all the political parties under the same umbrella while taking the responsibility of developing physical and institutional infrastructure in villages and turn them into model villages.

Under this scheme, every Parliamentarian shall adopt villages which will be offered smart schools, universal access to basic health facilities, *pucca* housing to homeless villagers, etc.



**Tendulkar's adopted village now stands as a model village in Andhra Pradesh.**

The village where open defecation was once prevalent has today become an open defecation free (ODF) village. The village which was muttering in the darkness now boasts of a 24x7 power supply and uninterrupted water supply. With such developments, Puttamraju Kandriga stands as a model village in AP.

The Yash Pal Committee made a definitive statement on Indian education system where it is said, “We have tended to imprison disciplinary studies in opaque walls. This has restricted flights of imagination and limited our creativity”. This statement was one of the many given by the Committee in their *Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education* report in 2009. Given its gravity, both the government & educational establishments have decided to mend their ways for the betterment of the academic future.

Heeding to Yash Pal Committee report, universities are encouraging the students to step out and initiate a dialogue with communities living outside the university walls. Given the newfound enthusiasm to engage with the external communities, an uncharted territory has been opened up to the academicians.

To encourage the interactions, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous body under University Grants Commission (UGC), laid a guideline stating that ‘the best practices in community engagement need to be identified in order to disseminate them among Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the country for the benefit of the academic community & the society’. One of the first to honour that guideline was Savitribhai Phule Pune University. The varsity management initiated *Samarth Bharath Abhiyaan* programme whose sole objective was that each college needs to be adopted



## Community University Engagement

### *The Future of Indian Education*

a village. The programme was a huge success as 573 villages were adopted & developed by colleges.

To lend a helping a hand to UGC, Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) has created another scheme which shares the same objective of UGC. Under this new scheme, National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF), a new grading system has been set up. The MHRD will rank the universities as per their social contribution. The universities which rank the highest will receive more funds to propagate Community University Engagement

(CUE). An added benefit for the students who participate in this scheme is that they get the opportunity to field test their theoretical knowledge.

Gandhi said, “India lives in her seven hundred thousand villages”, a quote which is still relevant to the contemporary times. Thanks to Yash Pal Committee, the academic community is no longer alienating themselves from the populace living outside their walls. They are now stepping forward to hone their knowledge and help the rural communities. A development which certainly would have made Gandhi happy.

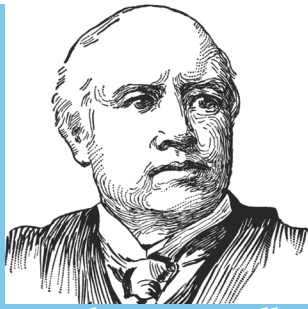
## Malnutrition will be a thing of past in Khwajapur

With the recent Government initiatives, Khwajapur village in Uttar Pradesh will soon have none suffering from malnutrition. As per the recent numbers, only 3 out of 266 children are reported to be nutrient deficient. The numbers were relatively very high in the past.

Khwajapur village is a part of Kako-

ri block in Lucknow district, Uttar Pradesh. With a total population of 1152, the people of the village have tackled the problem of malnutrition by providing right food to their children with ample assistance from the Government. Malnourished children are given extra vansapathi and a packet of milk powder everyday to become nourished at the earliest.

Government has also done the needful by developing the infrastructure in the village. Yet, people here have reported that although there are good facilities, people show least interest in farming. While the literacy rate of this village is 65%, most of them earn their bread as daily wage labourers.



Robert Ingersoll

# It's Time to Rebuild Rural India

**Knowledge sharing is knowledge mobilization**

**Linking research with community**

“We rise by lifting others” said Robert Ingersoll, an American lawyer, a Civil War veteran. The ideals of Ingersoll should be adopted by every student who can contribute towards the development of rural India through their education. At present Universities are going through a major change where India is investing heavily in its higher education and would like to see a positive transformation in rural areas. This can be achieved through community engagement by substantial academic engagement in teaching and research with rural India. There are many initiatives and efforts which are being carried out by Institutions to rebuild the rural areas.

The local community is provided with the knowledge available to the higher knowledge institutions in the form of surveys, camps, training, films, maps, study reports, public hearings, policy briefs, teaching and health services in communities. The best example is ‘Legal Aid Clinics’ set up by law colleges in India in which the students stage Legal Aid Camps in villages. The faculty and attorney supervise the camps to ensure that the students are giving the right advice and giving good judgment.

Various institutions devise joint research projects in partnership with communities in which the community’s own knowledge is integrated into the design and conduct of research. The best example is BPS Mahila Vishwavidyalaya in Sonipat Kendra. In an attempt to re-connect, universities are establishing a proper interface with the community and university students through visits to the villages. This is a noble attempt made by academic communities.



## Baraulia- A Village in Transformation

*Thanks to Manohar Parrikar*



Manohar Parrikar

“We must have zero tolerance for error”, said Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar. By adopting Baraulia, a remote village in Amethi district of Uttar Pradesh in 2015, Parrikar is on the path to make it a model village by removing errors and imperfections.

Soon after the adoption, the rural community were introduced to the areas of personal hygiene and 100 toilets were built. To overcome erratic power supply, new transformers and more than 200 solar power lights have been installed in the village. Also, the drinking water problem is being attended to with a community water tank which is under construction.

Yet, there is a long way to go for Baraulia to become a model village. As per the statement of *Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana*, a programme which encourages village adoption & development, a model village needs

to have ICT and space technologies available to aid farmers, practical & smart education, financial connectivity. These are some of the core elements that are needed to exist in a model village, which are absent in Baraulia for now.

Also, kids of this village trek a distance of 18 KM to reach the nearest school. The biggest challenge of them all is that Baraulia has not become open-defecation free. As the village pradhan Surendra Pratap bleakly summed it up, “The population of the village is nearly 6000. Another 1000 toilets need to be constructed”.

# Fostering Capacity Building in Rural India

In one of his addresses, Late President Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam said “Building capacity dissolves difference. It irons out inequalities.” In this context, Individuals need to keep pace with ever changing knowledge and accordingly develop cognitive, effective and skill based competencies.

Capacity building nurtures individuals in developing and strengthening skills that organizations and communities demand to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world. Capacity building of communities through various kinds of field prac-



tice is aimed at making an individual more self-reliant and conscious of their surroundings.

Training programmes by Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) for community researchers or learners render best methods for capacity building more importantly to the marginalized people. Organizations

like PRIA are consistently engaged in a process of change to simultaneously empower citizens, in particular the poor and the marginalized, while sensitizing government agencies and shaping policies. The key emphasis for capacity building is to help make the transition from conventional to participatory approach and beyond that to community-led approaches.

## Veerannapally, a Transformed Village Now

“I wanted to adopt a remote village deprived of development”, said Vinod Kumar, Member of Parliament from Karimnagar district on November 1, 2014. Immediately after that he adopted Veerannapally in his constituency under the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojna. In the span of two years, Veerannapally village in the district of Karimnagar, Telangana State saw the best of change.

This village is at a distance of 170 km from Hyderabad which is 30 km from the main road. Located amidst dense forest and segregated into 8 thandas (localities), majority of the population in the village are from Backward Classes,

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The most important problem that had bothered the people of the village was a five-decade dispute which barred farmers from sowing their piece of land. Soon after adoption, Vinod stepped in and resolved the dispute. The District Collector distributed land ownership certificates to two hundred families. All-weather roads served to the problem of commutation as these thandas are now connected and convenient for the people to travel. The roads facilitated communicating as the people would meet often and talk thereby increasing the probabilities of socialization.

Narsaiah, a seventy-year-old man said “I spent all my life here but never witnessed such changes in my lifetime, there was nothing previously but now we have everything”. Women of the village started their own businesses forming self-help groups with the assistance from the Telangana State government. Works, on a total of 65 projects are being carried out currently. With the help of the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojna, there is a toilet in every house and every elder and a widow of the village receive their pension on time.



Veerannapally at a glance

**Today, the village has all-season roads, toilets and drinking water facility in every house, schools and anganwadis and zero malnourished children.**

# Shimla Women Break the Gender Barrier

“I will encourage other girls from my area to come out of their respective homes and work towards being financially independent. I am learning to drive in pursuit of becoming self-reliant.”, said Sangeeta Thakur who is part of Shimla’s Rural Self-Employment Training Institute (RSETI). It is an initiative which aims at empowering women by providing driving classes.

“It’s not easy for women to break social barriers and think about living independently. A woman in the driver’s seat is a symbol of social change.” said Suman Lata, who is also a part of the programme. A batch of twenty one women ranging from college students to housewives are going through a month-long training.

Shimla Deputy Commissioner RC Thakur came up with this idea when they received a lot of complaints about drivers charging unfairly and behaving rudely. Training women would ensure that wom-



en travellers can take cabs without any hesitation.

RSETI is established with the help of the Government of India and the State government. Spread across the country, the programme is helping solve the unemployment problem among rural women in Shimla.

## Fight to End Child Marriages in Rural Bihar

In an attempt to end child marriages, separate groups have come up with a unique initiative to create awareness among girls. One such group is Sukanya Club formed at the panchayat level encourage girls to play football in Dharhara village, Bihar. The club also uses the opportunity to interact and educate them about the ill effects of girl child marriage and dowry.



The unique initiative started by girls at the village level has saved at least a dozen of them from underage marriage. These girls have been fighting against child marriage with the help of elected representatives of the panchayat and some local educated men and women. This organization has also taken the opportunity to

educate the children about dowry, the imbalance it has created in the society and its effect on individuals and the society.

“I have refused to marry and managed to convince my parents to allow me to study after I came into contact with this group who informed me about child marriage and its implications on health, education and our empowerment” said Nushrat of Mangalpur village.

### Development Through Empowerment

This attempt of the Sukanya Club has proven handy as nearly 500 girls in 25 villages under five panchayats in Phulwarisharief administrative block have been successfully trained to play football and get introduced on the ill effects of child marriages.

Years ago, Bihar accounted for 69 % of child marriages in India. But the latest National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) revealed lowest figures in child marriages in the last 10 years. This is due to increase in education among girls and such attempts to help more in improving the conditions of a girl child in Bihar or elsewhere.

# Taking Education to the Outdoors: IIM- Indore's Initiatives in Rural Immersion



To provide practical knowledge, Indian Institute of Management (IIM)- Indore introduced in its curriculum Rural Immersion Programme (RIP), an insightful learning experience.

The programme, introduced in 2008, has students embarking on a week-long trip to rural areas of Madhya Pradesh. Away from the city, the students are encouraged to interact with the rural communities.

As the programme exists in the IIM- Indore, it gives a unique opportunity for the institute's students to gain an edge, over their compet-

itors, with their practical knowledge on rural communities.

Participants, who are divided into units of 10 students, are sensitized on social issues prevalent in the region. They also gain an understanding of the rural economy and the opportunities for rural business.

As aspiring managers, they are expected to make observations to better the existing administrative policies. Overall, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the students of IIM- Indore to engage themselves with the rural communities.



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