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MAASAM

Monthly Account of Achievements, Successes and Memories

Content

The Learning Lens

FellowSpeak

Major Developments in CRISP

CRISP in Action

Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies

the learning lens

EMPOWERING INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH SWAYAM: A STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Akhil Ravella

Research Fellow, CRISP Telangana

This article explores the impact of SWAYAM, a digital learning initiative by the Government of India, in transforming higher education. Drawing from a study in Telangana, it highlights key challenges like credit transfer gaps, faculty engagement, and financial barriers, while also offering a strategic roadmap for nationwide adoption.

With standardized credit transfer, improved faculty training, better accessibility, and industry collaboration, SWAYAM can bridge the digital divide and enhance employability. By addressing these gaps, the initiative aligns with NEP 2020's vision for inclusive, high-quality education, making learning more accessible and future-ready across India.

India's digital revolution is reshaping the way education is accessed, delivered, and experienced. At the heart of this transformation lies SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), a Government of India initiative designed to make high-quality education accessible to all. As part of the initiative, SWAYAM-NPTEL has developed over 3000+ courses offering the best quality content produced by experienced faculty from IIMB (Indian Institute of Management), IITs (Indian Institute of Technology), INI (Institutes of National Importance), UGC (University Grants Commission), IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) etc. By providing affordable, top-tier educational resources, SWAYAM addresses the critical pillars of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: access, equity, and quality.

Recognizing the platform's transformative potential, a strategy may be adopted for SWAYAM implementation in line with the guidelines and frameworks issued by UGC on the implementation of SWAYAM. This is advocated by a detailed study conducted in Telangana, offering actionable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and best practices for integrating SWAYAM into higher education. The findings from Telangana provide a blueprint for all states that are in their initial phase to adopt, adapt, and scale this initiative to meet their unique needs while ensuring alignment with UGC frameworks.

Learning from the Telangana Experience

The study in Telangana presented a diverse picture of SWAYAM adoption and implementation. While autonomous colleges showcased a degree of integration, affiliated colleges struggled due to their lack of autonomy in designing their academic curriculum and non-adoption by the universities. The result of this is that only around 20 percent of SWAYAM Local Chapters were active in the state. The challenges identified were, that the credit transfer mechanisms—a core feature of SWAYAM—were underutilized, with most implementing institutions only incorporating 1-2% of credits through SWAYAM, as against the UGC's allowance for earning up to 40% of credits through SWAYAM.

Financial constraints posed a significant challenge, particularly for economically disadvantaged students. The ₹1,000 examination fee, combined with the logistical burden of travelling to distant examination centres, discouraged participation. Additionally, misalignment between SWAYAM course schedules and institutional academic calendars further hindered smooth implementation.

Another critical area of concern was faculty engagement. While many educators enrolled in SWAYAM's Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs), completion rates were low. This was attributed to a lack of institutional incentives, insufficient awareness, and limited integration of FDP completion into professional advancement frameworks. Despite these challenges, the benefits of SWAYAM were clear. Students gained access to leading educators, flexible learning pathways, and industry-relevant skills, while institutions addressed faculty shortages in specialized disciplines.

A Comprehensive Strategy for SWAYAM Implementation

The overall status of active SWAYAM local chapters in the country also stands at around 20 percent which implies a gap in effective implementation. To address it, a strategy is built on the insights gained from the study in Telangana and guidelines by UGC on SWAYAM implementation, presenting a phased and scalable framework for SWAYAM implementation. This strategy focuses on addressing the systemic challenges identified during the study while leveraging the platform's potential to transform education.

The first priority is the standardization of credit transfer mechanisms. State higher education departments along with universities must adopt a uniform policy that mandates the integration of UGC's 40% credit allowance for SWAYAM courses. This includes establishing clear guidelines for credit accumulation, transfer, and equivalence through the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) system. Ensuring that students can seamlessly earn, and transfer credits is key to fostering widespread adoption. To achieve this, extensive awareness programmes, instructions and guidelines need to be laid down for the adoption of ABC by all the higher education institutions.

Accessibility is another critical focus. It is recommended that institutions implementing are equipped with high-speed internet and computer labs to facilitate uninterrupted access to SWAYAM courses. A state-wide awareness campaign should highlight the platform's benefits, targeting students, educators, and administrators. Aligning SWAYAM course schedules with academic calendars will further simplify integration, enabling students to incorporate these courses into their regular studies without disruptions. To overcome the challenge of the academic schedules of SWAYAM and universities, the new 'Framework for Universities to conduct examinations for SWAYAM courses' released by UGC needs to be adopted into their ordinances.

Faculty development is integral to the strategy. It is recommended that FDPs should be mandatory for all educators and link their completion to career advancement and promotions. This will incentivize participation and ensure that faculty members are equipped to integrate SWAYAM courses into their teaching. Workshops, training sessions, and peer learning groups will provide additional support, fostering a culture of digital learning within institutions.

Phased Implementation and Monitoring

The strategy emphasizes a phased approach to ensure systematic and effective implementation. The groundwork phase involves establishing a state-level SWAYAM Implementation Committee (SSIC) to oversee the initiative and develop comprehensive policy guidelines. This phase also includes appointing nodal officers at the university and institutional levels to coordinate efforts and ensure alignment with UGC frameworks.

A pilot phase will include well-equipped institutions, preferably autonomous institutions and NAAC-accredited institutions to test the recommendations, including credit transfer mechanisms, mandatory FDPs, and enhanced student support systems. These pilots will provide valuable insights, enabling the refinement of strategies before scaling up to all higher education institutions.

Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be integral to the process. A state-level dashboard will track key performance indicators, such as enrolment, completion rates, and credit transfers. Regular audits and reviews will ensure accountability and identify areas for improvement.

Collaborating with Industry and Ensuring Sustainability

To maximize the impact of SWAYAM, it is imperative for collaboration with industry partners. SSIC should work with employers to recognize SWAYAM certifications in recruitment processes, aligning courses with industry needs and addressing specific skill gaps. This integration will enhance the employability of students and ensure that SWAYAM remains relevant in a rapidly evolving job market.

Financial sustainability is another key consideration. It is recommended to explore subsidies for examination fees and developing state-level funding mechanisms to support economically disadvantaged students. Similarly, faculty taking up FDPs proactively and completing more than the required may be provided with an incentive mechanism. These measures will ensure that financial barriers do not hinder access to SWAYAM's transformative opportunities.

A Vision for Inclusive Education

The lessons learned from Telangana underscore the importance of a structured and collaborative approach to SWAYAM implementation. While challenges such as credit transfer gaps, logistical issues, and low faculty engagement are significant, they are not insurmountable. With a clear strategy and collective effort, states can overcome these barriers and unlock the full potential of SWAYAM.

This initiative represents a pivotal moment for India's education system. As the nation strives to achieve the NEP 2020 goal of a 50% Gross Enrollment Ratio, SWAYAM offers a powerful tool to expand access, improve quality, and foster equity in higher education. The strategy provides a roadmap for states to harness this potential, ensuring that every learner, regardless of their background, has access to the opportunities they deserve.

By addressing systemic challenges, fostering partnerships between government bodies, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders, and embracing a phased approach, India can create an educational ecosystem that is inclusive, future-ready, and globally competitive. SWAYAM is not just a platform; it is a promise of equitable learning and a brighter future for millions of aspiring learners.

FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTREAM: DATA PRIVACY FOR POOREST OF THE POOR HOUSEHOLDS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Rohit Dey

Research Fellow, CRISP Central Office, Hyderabad

In this article, the writer examines the vulnerabilities of PoP (Poorest of the Poor) households in India's digital landscape, emphasizing the risks of data misuse, identity theft, and election manipulation. With limited digital literacy, these communities often share personal data without awareness of its potential exploitation.

The article highlights how the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, addresses these concerns through informed consent, data security, and accountability measures. It also proposes key recommendations—including awareness campaigns, localized Data Protection Officers, and stricter monitoring—to ensure PoP households benefit from digital inclusion without compromising their privacy and security.

Introduction

India's journey towards becoming a digitally inclusive society has been remarkable. However, within its diverse population, the poorest of the poor (PoP) households, often residing in rural areas, face unique vulnerabilities in the digital age. These PoP households, typically excluded from formal financial systems and digital literacy initiatives, are prone to exploitation in the absence of robust data protection frameworks. The rise of digital initiatives, including the exhaustive data collection for the **Inclusive Livelihood Program's (ILP)** monitoring and evaluation, further emphasizes the critical need for safeguarding their personal data.

The agenda for data protection in this context is twofold:

1. To empower PoP households with confidence in digital systems by ensuring their personal data is protected.
2. To mitigate risks such as data misuse, identity theft, and election manipulation that can disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

Data protection is particularly significant for rural PoP households because of their limited internet use, inadequate awareness about digital rights, and susceptibility to political and economic exploitation. This article explores the importance of data protection, the challenges faced by PoP households, and how India's **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** can address

these concerns.

Vulnerabilities of Data Loss and Misuse

PoP households are among the most vulnerable to data-related risks due to their socio-economic disadvantages. Studies highlight that these communities often provide personal data to government or private entities as part of welfare schemes without understanding its potential misuse. For example, data leaks or unauthorized sharing of personal information can lead to identity theft, financial fraud, or even targeting by predatory lenders. Additionally, the lack of consent mechanisms exacerbates the issue, as individuals are often unaware of how their data is being processed or shared (PRS Legislative Research, 2023; Amlegals, 2023).

Harmful Use of Personal Data

One of the gravest concerns in the misuse of personal data is its potential for election manipulation. Research shows that political entities can exploit datasets to target vulnerable populations with misinformation or coercive messaging, thereby influencing their voting behavior. This is particularly concerning for PoP households in rural India, where digital literacy is low, and individuals may unknowingly fall prey to such manipulation (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 2023; Ideas for India, 2020). Misuse of personal data in such ways threatens the democratic process and the integrity of elections.

Data Privacy as a Fundamental Right

The Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. Union of India (2017) landmark judgment recognized privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. This ruling emphasized that personal data protection is intrinsic to individual autonomy and dignity. For PoP households, ensuring privacy is critical not just to protect their rights but also to foster trust in welfare schemes/programs like the ILP. As the Supreme Court noted, data privacy is an enabler of liberty and security in the digital era (Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs Union of India, 2017).

The Need for Data Protection

The vulnerabilities faced by PoP households underscore the urgent need for comprehensive data protection mechanisms. Without safeguards, digital initiatives aimed at empowering these communities can unintentionally exacerbate their marginalization. Data protection laws must address issues like informed consent, accountability for data fiduciaries, and redress mechanisms to ensure that the rights of the most vulnerable are upheld.

How the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 Safeguards PoP Households

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDPA) provides a robust framework for addressing the challenges identified in the previous section. By mapping these issues to specific provisions of the Act, we can evaluate its efficacy in safeguarding the rights of PoP households.

Informed Consent and Transparency

The DPDPA 2023 mandates that personal data be processed only with the informed and explicit consent of the individual (Government of India, 2023, Section 4). This is critical for PoP households, as it ensures:

- Clear communication of how their data will be used.

- An option to provide consent in local languages, aligning with the linguistic diversity of rural India.
- The ability to withdraw consent easily, empowering individuals to retain control over their data.

Data Minimization and Purpose Limitation

The Act restricts the collection and use of personal data to what is strictly necessary for specified purposes (Government of India, 2023, Section 7). This provision protects PoP households from:

- Over-collection of data that could lead to greater misuse.
- Misuse of data for non-programmatic purposes, such as election-related targeting or commercial exploitation.

Safeguards Against Election Manipulation

Given the risk of election manipulation, the DPDPA's emphasis on accountability for data fiduciaries is significant. Entities collecting or processing personal data are required to implement stringent security measures and can face penalties of up to ₹250 crore for data breaches (Government of India, 2023, Schedule). This creates a strong deterrent against unauthorized sharing of PoP data for political or other manipulative purposes.

Rights of Data Principals

The Act grants individuals several rights, including the right to access, correct, and erase their personal data. For PoP households, these rights are crucial to:

- Correct inaccuracies that may affect their access to welfare benefits.
- Erase data no longer required, reducing the risk of misuse.
- Seek redressal for grievances through accessible mechanisms.

The Act grants individuals several rights, including the right to access, correct, and erase their personal data. For PoP households, these rights are crucial to:

Data Security Obligations

The DPDPA 2023 requires data fiduciaries to implement technical and organizational measures to prevent data breaches (Government of India, 2023, Section 8). For PoP households, this ensures:

- Protection of sensitive information, such as biometric or financial data.
- Immediate notification in case of data breaches, allowing individuals to take remedial action.

Special Provisions for Vulnerable Populations

Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of children and marginalized groups, the Act includes additional safeguards for processing their data. These provisions can be extended to PoP households to ensure their protection against exploitation (Government of India, 2023, Section 9).

Conclusion

The transition to a digital society offers unprecedented opportunities for inclusion and empowerment. However, for PoP households, this transition also presents significant risks. Ensuring robust data protection is critical to safeguarding their dignity, privacy, and participation in democratic and socio-economic processes.
The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 represents a significant step forward in addressing these challenges. Its provisions on consent, accountability, data minimization, and security create a framework that protects the most vulnerable while fostering trust in digital systems. However, effective implementation and enforcement are crucial to realizing the Act's potential.

Recommendations for the Government Implementing Inclusive Livelihood Programs

To maximize the impact of the DPDPA and ensure the protection of PoP households, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Community Awareness Campaigns:

• Conduct grassroots-level awareness campaigns to educate PoP households about their digital rights and the provisions of the DPDPA.
• Use local languages and culturally appropriate communication methods to ensure comprehension.

2. Localized Data Protection Officers (DPOs):

• Appoint DPOs at the district or block level to oversee compliance and address grievances related to data protection.

3. Capacity Building for Implementing Agencies:

• Train government and non-governmental organizations involved in the ILP on best practices for data collection, storage, and processing.
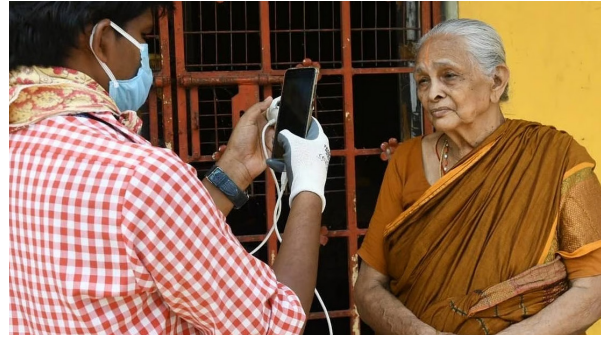
4. Audits and Monitoring:

•Conduct regular audits of data fiduciaries to ensure adherence to the DPDPA.
•Establish independent monitoring bodies to oversee the use of personal data in livelihood programs.

5. Data Protection in Welfare Schemes:

• Ensure that all data collected for welfare schemes is stored securely and used exclusively for intended purposes.
• Prohibit the sharing of PoP data with political entities or third parties without explicit consent.

6. Redressal Mechanisms:

• Simplify grievance redressal processes to make them accessible to rural populations.
• Establish toll-free helplines and offline centers for filing complaints related to data misuse.

By implementing these recommendations, the government can ensure that PoP households benefit from digital inclusion without compromising their rights or security. This will not only enhance the effectiveness of programs like the ILP but also contribute to a more equitable and inclusive digital society.

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FellowSpeak

Abiya Jose,
CRISP Fellow, Tamil Nadu

The CRISP Fellowship has been an exciting and truly transformative journey so far. In just a short period, I have had the privilege of contributing to projects in both School Education and Rural Development. Each domain has brought its own distinctive challenges and learning moments, broadening my perspective and helping me develop a more nuanced understanding of the systems we work within. This experience has also played a vital role in enhancing my professional and interpersonal skills.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of this fellowship has been the opportunity to work closely with a diverse range of government officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders. These interactions have given me invaluable insights into policy formulation and on-ground implementation complexities. Field visits to various villages, schools, and other institutions have played a pivotal role in enhancing my learning experience. These visits have provided firsthand exposure to diverse environments, enabling me to observe and understand real-world challenges, community dynamics, and institutional functioning. They have also offered opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds, gaining insights into their perspectives and unique ways of life.

The mentorship component of the fellowship has been another standout feature. As someone still in the early stages of my professional journey, the guidance and support from experienced mentors have been pivotal. Their encouragement has not only helped me refine my skills but also equipped me to navigate complex scenarios with greater confidence and clarity. I am also grateful to be able to work with such passionate and supportive peers.

As I move forward in this fellowship, I am deeply grateful for the perfect blend of challenges and opportunities it presents. It is more than just a professional experience—it is a platform to contribute meaningfully to society while learning from some of the most inspiring individuals and initiatives. I look forward to continuing this enriching journey and making the most of the opportunities to grow, both personally and professionally.

Major Developments at CRISP

Bihar Government Signs MoU with CRISP to Implement AEDPs in 25 Colleges

In a significant step towards strengthening skill-integrated higher education, the Government of Bihar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) on January 18, 2025. Under this agreement, Applied and Employability Development Programs (AEDPs) will be introduced in 25 colleges from the academic year 2025-26 as part of the National Initiative for Skill-Integrated Higher Education (NISHE) project.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Shri Sunil Kumar, Ex-IPS, Hon'ble Minister for Education, Government of Bihar; Shri Baidyanath Yadav, IAS, Secretary, Higher Education, Shri R. Subrahmanyam, IAS (Retd.), Secretary & CEO, of CRISP; and Shri ELSN Bala Prasad, IAS (Retd.), Member, of CRISP.

This initiative aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry, equipping students with practical skills and employability-focused education. The collaboration between Bihar's Higher Education Department and CRISP is expected to enhance career prospects for students, fostering a skilled and job-ready workforce.

CRISP Leadership Meets Andhra HRD Minister to Discuss ASEEM Initiative

Andhra Pradesh is set to witness a major transformation in its education sector with the proposed Andhra State Swarnandhra Education Excellence Mission (ASEEM). In a significant step towards realizing the vision of "Swarna Andhra 2047", CRISP leadership held an intensive three-hour discussion with Mr. Nara Lokesh, Hon'ble Minister for Human Resource Development, to deliberate on the initiative's framework.

The ASEEM mission aims to make Andhra Pradesh a hub for high-level skills and entrepreneurship. The proposal outlines universal access to quality pre-primary education, impro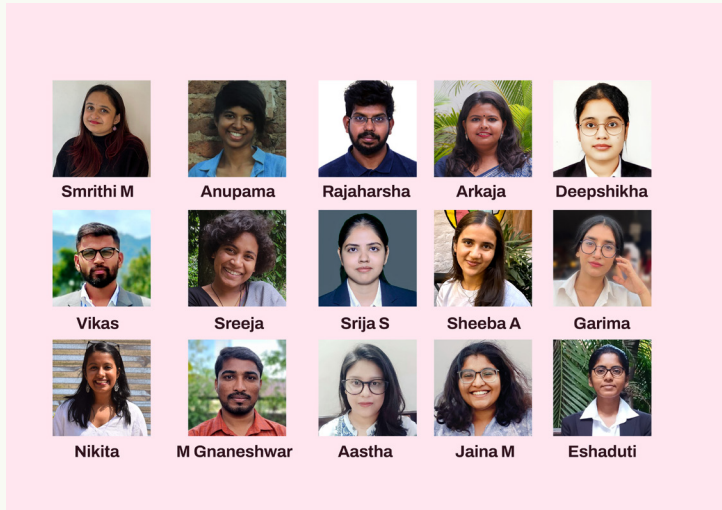ved learning outcomes in schools, and enhanced employability through Apprenticeship-embedded Degree Programmes in colleges and universities. These reforms are expected to equip students with future-ready skills while strengthening the state's position as a leader in education and innovation

The discussions were marked by the Minister's proactive and enthusiastic approach, reinforcing his commitment to driving meaningful change. CRISP leadership lauded his vision and determination, expressing optimism that ASEEM will serve as a model for educational excellence across India.

CRISP Set to Welcome New Fellowship Cohort with Comprehensive Orientation

The Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) is gearing up to welcome a new cohort of fellows as it embarks on another transformative journey in public sector innovation. The CRISP Fellowship 2025 is set to commence in February, beginning with an intensive orientation program from February 3 to 6 at the MCR HRD Institute of Telangana, Hyderabad.

Smrithi M Anupama Rajaharsha Arkaja Deepshikha
Vikas Sreeja Srija S Sheeba A Garima
Nikita M Gnaneshwar Aastha Jaina M Eshaduti

The orientation will serve as a crucial platform for the 15 selected fellows, offering them the opportunity to engage with leading experts and resource persons from diverse domains within the public sector. The CRISP founding and governing body members will also address the fellows, setting the stage for their journey ahead. The program aims to equip the cohort with the necessary insights and strategies to navigate and contribute effectively to public systems.

This year's fellowship welcomes a dynamic group of 15 promising individuals:
Smrithi M Nair, Anupama K, Rajaharsha Narasingula, Arkaja Giri, Deepshikha Trivedi, Vikas Walke, Sreeja Rachel Varghese, Srija Sahay, Sheeba Allie, Garima Pandey, Nikita, Mudavath Gnaneshwar, Aastha Thakur, Jaina M Haran, and Eshaduti Dey.

With diverse expertise and a shared commitment to public service, these fellows are poised to bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the field. CRISP looks forward to guiding them through this rigorous yet rewarding journey, shaping them into future leaders of public administration.

CRISP Holds Advisory Board Meeting, Hosts Online Convocation for 2023-24 Cohort

The Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) convened its Advisory Board Meeting on Friday, January 17, bringing together governing board members and advisory board members to deliberate on key strategic initiatives.

The meeting focused on future plans and project analyses, assessing ongoing programs and setting the roadmap for upcoming endeavors. A major highlight of the session was the online convocation ceremony for the 2023-24 CRISP Fellowship cohort. The event marked the successful completion of the fellowship, celebrating the achievements of the outgoing fellows and their contributions to the public sector.

CRISP remains committed to fostering research-driven innovation in governance, and the discussions from this meeting will shape its future engagements.

CRISP Releases Two Key Publications at Advisory Board Meeting

The Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) marked a significant milestone at its Advisory Board Meeting on January 17 with the release of two insightful publications, shedding light on rural realities and early childhood education challenges.

The first, "Vivid Landscapes: Immersion Reports," is a compelling compilation of field experiences from the Village Immersion Program. This initiative took CRISP fellows to remote villages across India, where they engaged directly with local communities to understand the impact of government schemes, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural landscapes. The book captures their lived experiences, offering a nuanced perspective on rural aspirations and challenges while providing valuable insights for policy formulation.

The second publication, "Time-Use Study of Anganwadi Workers in Andhra Pradesh: Insights for Strengthening," presents a critical analysis of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The study, based on observations from 21 Anganwadi Centres over eight days, highlights the pressing issue of overburdened Anganwadi workers (AWWs). Findings reveal that AWWs spend only 3.14 hours daily on ECCE, with the rest of their time consumed by administrative tasks. The report underscores the need for better infrastructure, targeted training, and stronger collaboration to enhance learning outcomes for India's youngest children.

Both books aim to drive meaningful dialogue and policy action, reinforcing CRISP's commitment to evidence-based research and innovation in public systems.

CRISP in Action

NISHE January 2025 Highlights

📍 **Madhya Pradesh**

Mr. Abhishek Saini, a Fellow at CRISP Madhya Pradesh, visited several institutions in the last week, including Government Madhav Science College, Ujjain; Vikram University, Ujjain; Government Madhav Arts and Commerce College, Ujjain; Government Holkar Science College, Indore; and Mata Jijabai Government PG Girls College, Indore. During his visits, he interacted with students, faculty, and management to explain the benefits of AEDPs.
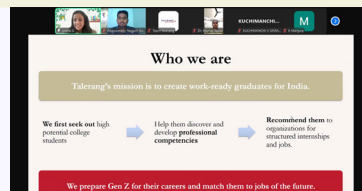
📍 **Telangana**

Mr. K. Prudhvi, NISHE Associate, CRISP Telangana visited BJR GDC, Narayanaguda; GDCW, Begumpet; Vivekananda GDC, Vidyanagar; GDC, Kukatpally and AV College, Domalguda to interact with students.

On January 24, 2025, Mr. K. Prudhvi, an NISHE Associate at CRISP Telangana, met with Prof. Bala Kista Reddy, the Chairman of TGCHE, at his office to explain the project and seek government support for expanding AEDPs starting from the academic year 2025-26.

Work Readiness Program

On January 25, 2025, CRISP, in collaboration with Talerang, hosted an engaging virtual orientation for the Work Readiness Program. This event attracted an impressive turnout, with over 100 dedicated faculty members and more than 500 eager students participating. The orientation aimed to equip attendees with essential skills and insights for navigating the professional landscape, fostering a strong foundation for future career success.

▶ HIGHER EDUCATION

📍 Uttar Pradesh

Promising Visit to Govt PG College, Noida

Divya Malakar, Consultant, CRISP UP, visited Govt PG College, Noida, to discuss NAAC accreditation and AEDP implementation. The college impressed us with its dynamic principal and student-centric initiatives like Youth Parliament, organic farming, vermicomposting, and student meals. Despite challenges, the college fosters active student engagement. Outcome: The college will apply for NAAC accreditation once the portal opens and is set to start AEDP in the next semester, leveraging its strong student base.

Successful Orientation Session with Metro Brands (AEDP)

RASCI, in collaboration with Metro Brands Ltd., conducted an orientation for first-year students of Sri Tika Ram Mahavidyalaya (Aligarh), Sahu Ramswaroop Girls College (Bareilly), and Mahila Mahavidyalaya (Kanpur). Students were introduced to retail career opportunities and will now begin apprenticeships in simultaneous mode, balancing coursework with on-the-job training at retail outlets.opportunities and will now begin apprenticeships in simultaneous mode, balancing coursework with on-the-job training at retail outlets.

Positive Progress on the CHEQUE Project at the University of Lucknow

Mr. Chandramani held a meeting with Prof. Manuka Khanna, Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Lucknow, to discuss the CHEQUE Project. An in-depth discussion covered the project's clauses and modus operandi, and the Pro Vice Chancellor showed a positive outlook.

▶ RURAL DEVELOPMENT

📍 Karnataka

Graduation Ceremony for CRISP Karnataka's First Cohort Fellows

CRISP President Mr S M Vijayanand's serendipitous presence in Bengaluru provided an opportunity for the Karnataka team to quickly organize a certificate award ceremony for the outgoing CRISP Fellows of the first cohort. Three Fellows - Daksha Jain, Hashir P V and Harshitha J - received their Fellowship graduation certificates from Mr Vijayanand, thus capping with flourish a successful and enriching Fellowship with the KA team.

Daksha will be continuing with CRISP as a senior consultant on the Inclusive Livelihoods Project (ILP). Hashir and Harshitha will be working on the same project (ILP) as consultants with PRADAN. We wish the graduating Fellows the very best in their careers and look forward to their continued engagement with CRISP as alumni from the first cohort.

CRISP KA Presents an Interactive Seminar on Rural Crèches at Azim Premji University's Local Governance Course

Dr Lalita Pulavarti, State Lead - Karnataka, presented a case study on Rural Crèches to the participants of Azim Premji University's course on Local Democracy. Dr Pulavarti led an interactive and activity-based discussion of the rural crèches initiative (called Koosina Mane – Infant's home) to showcase innovation in public policy, theory and practice. The participants, representing NGO staff from various states, were highly interactive, engaged, and imaginative in their group activities and presentations.

Building Collaborations: CRISP KA Team and Mercy Mission, Karnataka

The CRISP KA team facilitated the field immersion component of Mercy Mission Fellowship for the third time. The three teams presented their findings and experience to the Commissioner. CRISP's hand holding efforts, including orientation to the flagship programs and periodic VCs with the teams during their immersion was much appreciated by Mercy Mission.

Mercy Mission (https://mercy-mission.org/mmfp.php) is a coalition of NGOs in Bengaluru that came together to provide critical services during the COVID crisis. The Mission now runs a 9-month Fellowship program to give youth the opportunity of an immersive, experiential dive into the social sector including both government and non-government engagements over the 9-month Fellowship. Through an MoU with the department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR), Mercy Mission places their Fellows in teams in various districts for a month, providing an immersive opportunity to study governance and the department's various flagship programs in the Gram Panchayats. CRISP KA was given the task of helping Mercy Mission orient its Fellows to the department's programs, and handhold while they are in the field. It is a mutual learning experience, culminating in a presentation by the Fellows to the RDPR department. This engagement with Mercy Mission is one example of the KA team building collaborations and networks with other NGOs in the area.

Tamil Nadu

Strengthening Rural Engagement: CRISP Tamil Nadu and UBA Institutions attended Gram Sabha

The CRISP Tamil Nadu team participated in the Gram Sabha meetings on 26th January in four villages—Nemili, Ayyampettai, Sogandi, and Pazhathandalam—along with Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) institutions. The primary objective was to engage higher education institutions in rural development, identify local challenges, and develop sustainable solutions.

UBA student volunteers actively participated in the discussions, gaining firsthand experience of the Gram Sabha's role in community development. Each CRISP team member played a key role in guiding UBA institutions towards the true spirit of UBA, which aims to inspire college students to contribute meaningfully to rural transformation.

Strategic Discussions on Strengthening Panchayats with Rural Development Department

The CRISP Tamil Nadu team recently convened an insightful discussion on key strategies for localising SDGs, enhancing Panchayat Own Source Revenue, adopting alternative housing technologies, and Upgradation of sanitation. The meeting was chaired by S.M. Vijayanand IAS (Retd.), President, CRISP, and S. Ponniah IAS, Director of Rural Development, Government of Tamil Nadu. A key takeaway from this discussion was how to improve the tax collection mechanism and Own Source of Revenue, Upgrade the sanitation system at Panchayat, Beneficiary identification for adopting new technologies and the concept of "communitizing SDGs"—empowering communities to take ownership of achieving the SDG goals by 2030.

Building Stronger Villages: Strengthening the Panchayat-SHG Partnership

On 29th Jan, The CRISP Tamil Nadu team conducted a meeting with S M Vijayanand IAS (Retd), Divyadarshini IAS, Managing Director, TNCDW, to discuss one of the most impactful initiatives in the Panchayati Raj system—the Village Panchayat (VP) and Self-Help Group (SHG) partnership. The team has drafted a Government Order (GO) incorporating insights from the write shop held in July. The discussion focused on operationalising this initiative across Tamil Nadu, ensuring effective collaboration between Panchayats and SHGs. This partnership is set to empower both institutions, drive grassroots development, and promote inclusive and sustainable progress in villages.

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