CRISP
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FROM POLICY TO PROGRESS: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SHAPING INDIA'S FUTURE

Sandhya Kanneganti
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Founding Member, CRISP

"Education makes a people easy to lead but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave."

—Peter Brougham

"Quality education serves as a great equalizer; it lays the groundwork for a more equitable society, where opportunities are not dictated by one's circumstances but are instead accessible to all who dare to dream and strive for excellence."

Lecture summarised by

Anamika Nair,
Fellow CRISP, Rajasthan

Education serves as the very foundation upon which the socio-economic fabric of a nation is woven. In the intricate mosaic that is India, access to quality education isn't just a privilege; it's a fundamental right that underpins progress and fosters equity among its diverse populace. This pivotal role of education isn't confined to individual growth; it extends far beyond, shaping the collective destiny of a nation and propelling it towards prosperity.

In the vast expanse of India's educational landscape, recent strides have been made to bridge the gap in accessibility. The fact that approximately 92.9% of rural households now have schools within a 1-kilometer radius is a testament to these efforts. Similarly, urban areas boast an impressive 87.20% accessibility rate, reflecting a concerted push towards ensuring that education reaches every nook and cranny of the nation.

However, mere accessibility is only the first step towards realizing the transformative power of education. It's the quality of education imparted within these accessible institutions that truly determines their impact. Quality education serves as a great equalizer, it lays the groundwork for a more equitable society, where opportunities are not dictated by one's circumstances but are instead accessible to all who dare to dream and strive for excellence.

Legislative Milestones

Constitutional provisions underscore the importance of education and health, placing them under the concurrent list. Since Independence, India has witnessed the evolution of various educational policies aimed at enhancing the educational landscape. These include significant

commissions and acts such as the University Education Commission of 1959, the Kothari Commission of 1964-65, and the amended National Policy on Education of 1986, among others.

One of the landmark legislations in this realm is the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009), which mandated free and compulsory education for children. Building upon this legacy, the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 emerges as a transformative milestone.

NEP-tastic: Unpacking the National Education Policy

NEP 2020 introduces critical reforms in school education that hold the potential to bring about significant change. Among its key provisions is the mandate for 25% reservation for economically weaker sections in private schools, ensuring access to quality education for all. The policy envisions universal numeracy and literacy by 2030, integrating information technology into teaching methodologies, and reintegrating 2 crore students into the schooling system.

Emphasizing 21st-century skills and pedagogical innovation, NEP 2020 also proposes the establishment of the National Assessment Centre - PARAKH, to monitor children's progress through assessments. It advocates for foundational literacy and numeracy, universalization of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and the introduction of key stage exams in grades 3, 5, and 8. Furthermore, the policy envisions the creation of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to drive innovation and standardization in educational technology.

While NEP 2020 sets a visionary roadmap for educational transformation at the national level, the onus lies on the respective state governments to implement and adapt these policies to local contexts. Much work remains to be done to ensure that the benefits of these reforms reach every corner of the country, bridging the gaps in access and quality

education. As India strives towards its educational aspirations, collective efforts at both the central and state levels are imperative for realizing the full potential of education as a driver of socio-economic progress.

Legislative Milestones

Education funding and policies play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape of a nation. In India, various funding mechanisms and policy initiatives are employed to address the diverse needs and challenges within the education sector.

The allocation of education funds in India follows a structured approach, with states in the northeast receiving 90% of their education funds from the Government of India under the Centrally Sponsored State Programs (CSSP). The rest of the states, on the other hand, receive 60% from the central government and contribute 40% from the state budget. This funding is instrumental in implementing a range of policies and programs aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of education across the country.

Some noteworthy policies and programs at both the central and state levels include:

- **CSS - Samagra Siksha 60:40**: This integrated program encompasses the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education, covering pre-school to Class XII education.

- **Mid-Day Meal Program:** A flagship program aimed at improving nutrition levels among school children and encouraging school attendance.

- **ICT & Smart Class Program:** Implemented in 82,120 schools nationwide, this program focuses on integrating technology into classroom teaching.

- **Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) Yojana:** This initiative aims to develop and upgrade 14,500 schools across India.

- **NEP 2020 Implementation Plan:** The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 introduces comprehensive reforms in school education, with a focus on quality, accessibility, and innovation.

- **U-DISE:** The Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) serves as a comprehensive database for educational planning and monitoring.

Additionally, several states have launched specific programs tailored to their unique needs and priorities. For example:

- Kerala has made significant investments in school infrastructure and digital classrooms. - Andhra Pradesh's 'Nadu Nedu' initiative focuses on the development of schools with an outlay of over Rs.8000 crores

- Telangana's 'Mana Ooru/ Basthi, Mana Badi' program aims to enhance school infrastructure with an initial allocation of Rs. 3,497 crores for Phase I. - Delhi has initiated programs such as student focused Mission Buniyad, several infrastructural and teacher skills and competencies development efforts.

Global Context and Challenges

In the global context, India's progress in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education is significant but still requires substantial improvement. India ranks 112 out of 166 countries in terms of quality education, with various challenges such as adult literacy programs, student enrollment rates, and early childhood care and education. Based on GSDP data, even with some moderate enhancements, India's allocation towards education in terms of GDP stands at 2.9%, underscoring the imperative for heightened investment and strategic actions.

India's education system grapples with several challenges, including a shortage of quality teachers, a learning deficit among students, and disparities in access to education. To address these challenges, systemic reforms and targeted interventions are essential. Key areas of action include:

- Governance reforms to enhance accountability and efficiency.
- Strengthening teacher recruitment, training, and deployment mechanisms. - Increasing investment for strengthening quality of Early Childhood Care and Education - Focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy.
- Leveraging technology for effective teaching and learning.
- Prioritizing community participation and stakeholder engagement.
- Emphatic focus on student learning outcomes improvement, etc.

Final Thoughts: Deciphering the Crucial Role of Education in Socio-Economic Progress

To truly revolutionize India's education system, it's imperative to adopt a holistic strategy that spans policy reforms, substantial investments, and collaborative endeavors. Only through a comprehensive approach can the deep-rooted challenges be effectively addressed and innovative solutions harnessed. With concerted efforts, India can move closer to fulfilling its educational ambitions, ensuring that quality education becomes accessible to every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances.

As the nation charts its course in the realm of education, it must embrace a student-centric ethos, placing learners at the heart of every initiative. It's not just about building schools; it's about nurturing environments where minds are ignited, curiosity is encouraged, and potential is realized to the fullest. This approach, when coupled with effective governance structures and seamless program implementation, will serve as the cornerstone of progress. By empowering students with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in an ever-evolving world, India can pave the way for a future where every citizen is equipped to contribute meaningfully to society.

NAVIGATING THE CONVOLUTED DYNAMICS OF LAND ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

BK Agarwal IAS Retd.

Founding Member– CRISP

"An effective land administration system treats land as a functional economic asset, enabling smooth transfers, access to land-based credit, and comprehensive record-keeping. The ideal scenario involves registration of all land transactions and accurate reflection of ownership changes in the Record of Rights (ROR). **However, India's land administration faces significant hurdles like the lack of a robust ROR system in urban areas,** inadequate record formats, cumbersome title verification processes, absence of a centralized litigation tracking system, and complex registration procedures."

Lecture summarised by

Pooja Kapoor
Fellow CRISP, Madhya Pradesh

"In India, the land remains the mother of all conflicts - family, caste, community, regional or national."

—Shashi Tharoor (Author and politician)

Land is the ultimate resource essential for sustaining life on Earth. It serves as both a physical commodity and an abstract concept, with the rights to own or use it being as integral as an object rooted in soil. Good stewardship of land is crucial for the well-being of present and future generations. Land and its uses can be examined from various perspectives. Historically, human settlement has been marked by conflicts over land boundaries, influencing national and international disputes. These guidelines focus on land as a resource over which individuals or communities have ownership and use rights. Land can be bought, sold, taxed, and serves as the base for economic production. The term real estate describes land while property refers to man-made constructions. In the context above land refers to real property which refers to man-made constructions.

The role of land in India's economy is significant, albeit not always apparent. Sustainable development is unachievable without secure land rights, as land provides the incentive for long-term investments. For a developing country like India, secure and sustainable land rights are crucial for promoting economic growth and attracting investments. Achieving this requires a focus on land administration to ensure transparency in land transactions.
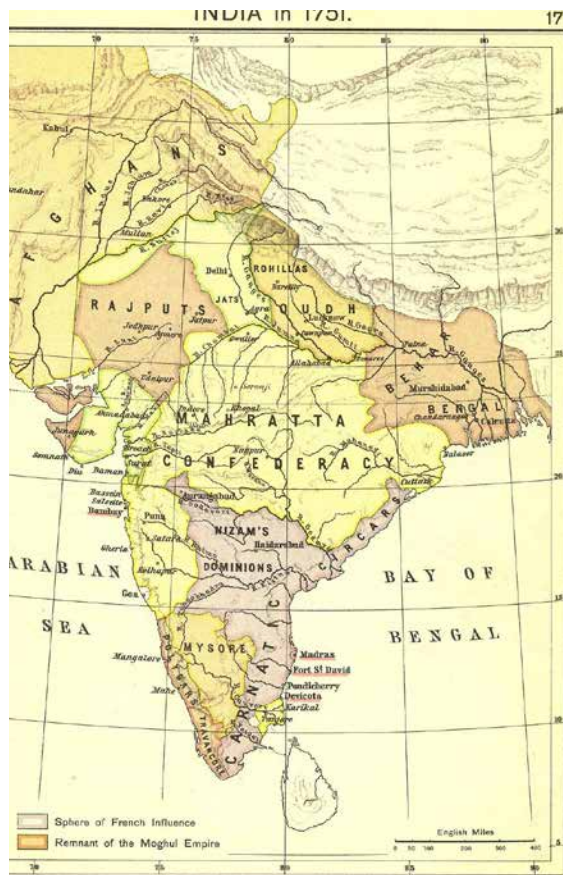
According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), land administration involves the processes of identifying, documenting, and sharing information about the ownership, value, and use of land and its resources. This includes the determination, often referred to as adjudication, of land rights and other characteristics, as well as surveying, describing, and meticulously documenting these elements[1]. Additionally, it involves providing the necessary information to support land markets.

Land administration is a crucial aspect of effective land management, focusing on several key areas to ensure the sustainable utilization of land resources. One of its core components involves establishing and implementing laws pertaining to land and land rights, which form the legal framework governing land ownership and usage. This includes managing Records-of-Rights meticulously, ensuring accurate and updated documentation of land ownership and related rights. Additionally, land administration involves registering deeds related to land transactions, which adds legal transparency and recognition to these dealings.

Moreover, land administration encompasses vital systems such as land revenue and property tax, which are essential for generating public revenue and maintaining financial stability. It also delves into land use and planning regulations, guiding the responsible development and utilisation of land resources. Accessibility of land information is another crucial aspect, ensuring transparency and ease of access to data related to land.

Furthermore, land administration extends to managing land acquisition processes, balancing public interests with fair compensation for landowners, and implementing effective dispute resolution mechanisms to address conflicts over land ownership and usage fairly and efficiently. Overall, it plays a pivotal role in multiple societal domains, including Gender Justice, Agriculture, poverty alleviation, urbanization, industrialization, infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and housing.

While the Indian Constitution guarantees equality before the law, a closer look at land inheritance reveals a persistent gap between legal pronouncements and the reality faced by women. The discriminatory inheritance practices and a lack of a gender-neutral framework continue to disadvantage women in land ownership. The Hindu Succession Act (HSA) of 1956 marked a significant step by granting women equal inheritance rights to self-acquired property of their parents. However, a crucial limitation remained – women were excluded from being coparceners in ancestral property held under the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) system. This meant daughters could not inherit ancestral land equally alongside sons. This was rectified through individual state amendments starting in the 1980s (Andhra Pradesh 1986, Tamil Nadu 1989, Maharashtra 1994, Karnataka

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1   The term land administration was coined by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in 1993.

1994) and finally through a national amendment to the HSA in 2005.

Land inheritance becomes even more complex when considering agricultural land. Section 4(2) of the original HSA (1956) left tenancy rights to be determined by local laws, which often perpetuated discriminatory practices against women. While this section was removed in 2005, some states still rely on these local laws for tenancy inheritance.

Further challenges arise for women belonging to specific communities. The HSA exempts Scheduled Tribes from its provisions, allowing them to follow customary laws that may disadvantage women. Similarly, Muslim inheritance law dictates that daughters inherit only half the share compared to sons. These practices reinforce a binary notion of gender, forcing individuals to choose between conforming to their assigned gender identity and accessing their rightful inheritance.

Looking ahead, initiatives like the SVAMITVA Scheme, [2] which aims to provide ownership rights to residents of rural and urban areas, hold promise for long-term gender justice. However, ensuring clear instructions within the scheme that guarantee women's rightful ownership is crucial. Despite constitutional safeguards, unequal land inheritance laws continue to disadvantage women in India, hence schemes like SVAMITVA are better initiatives to focus on gender justice and are some crucial steps towards a more equitable future.

In the pre-independence era, the British Raj implemented varying land management systems across India. The Zamindari system[3], prevalent in Bengal and other eastern regions, placed landlords (Zamindars) as intermediaries between the government and cultivators. In contrast, the Ryotwari system[4], implemented in Madras, Bombay, and Assam, recognized peasants (Ryots) as direct tenants paying revenue to the government. The Mahalwari system[5], applied in the North-West Provinces and Punjab, functioned similarly but involved village communities (Mahals) in revenue collection. These systems left a lasting impact on land ownership patterns in India.

A significant development in India's land reform history was the Bhoodan (Land Gift) movement, spearheaded by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in 1951. This non-violent campaign urged wealthy landowners to voluntarily gift a portion of their land to the landless. Although the movement achieved limited success in redistributing land, it raised awareness about inequities in land ownership.

During Indira Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister in the 1970s, her government made sweeping changes to property rights. The 25th Amendment to the Constitution in 1971 gave authorities the power to acquire private property for public purposes, followed by the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act in 1976 which imposed limits on vacant land ownership in urban areas. However, her controversial decision to abolish the long-standing Privy Purse

2. SVAMITVA Scheme: Launched by the Prime Minister of India in April 2024 under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, it aims to provide rural residents with property documentation rights for economic use.

3. Zamindari System: Introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, it granted permanent land rights without fixed rents or occupancy rights for cultivators. Zamindars collected revenue from farmers, with the government receiving a majority share.

4. Ryotwari System: Devised by Captain Alexander Read and Sir Thomas Munro in the late 18th century, it involved farmers paying land revenue directly to the state. Ryots had full rights over their land, including sale and leasing, as long as they paid the rent.

5. In 1822, Holt Mackenzie introduced the Mahalwari System in the Northwestern Provinces of the Bengal Presidency (now mostly in Uttar Pradesh). Revenue was collected from farmers by village headmen for the entire village, treated as a single unit called 'Mahal', with periodic revenue revisions instead of permanent fixes.

payments to former royal families in 1971 led to significant backlash.

The land reforms in India showcase a patchy record. Despite agriculture employing a significant portion (42%) of India's workforce and contributing 16% to GDP, land reforms aimed at equitable distribution and improved efficiency have had mixed results. While some states successfully transferred ownership to cultivators (Himachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala), implementation issues limited the national impact (only 4% of operated land).

Furthermore, a large number of informal tenants (15 million) cultivate vast areas (10 million hectares), and significant land remains fallow (26.72 million hectares in 2015-16). Formalizing tenancy and addressing fallow land hold the key to unlocking India's agricultural potential. The Niti Aayog's Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act (2016)[6] offers a framework, but wider state adoption is needed.

Land administration forms the bedrock for achieving several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at eradicating poverty, safeguarding the environment, and promoting peace by 2030. Secure land rights empower marginalized groups like small-scale farmers, women, and indigenous communities, directly impacting goals like poverty alleviation (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), and gender equality (SDG 5). Reforms ensuring equal access to land ownership and control for women are pivotal for gender parity.

Moreover, effective land management underpins the creation of sustainable cities (SDG 11), combating climate change (SDG 13), preserving ecosystems (SDG 15), and fostering peaceful societies (SDG 16). In India, land administration is a complex tapestry of laws and decentralized governance. Authority is distributed across the central government, state governments, and local bodies. This decentralized approach allows for tailored land management strategies across India's diverse regions.

Land administration's multifaceted role spans economic development, social equity, environmental conservation, and conflict resolution. Its impact resonates across multiple SDGs, underscoring its significance as a catalyst for holistic and sustainable progress. Strengthening land administration systems is crucial for India to achieve its sustainable development aspirations.

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6.   The Model Land Lease Act, 2016 by NITI Aayog allows states to create leasing laws tailored to local needs, aiming to legalize agricultural leasing, protect rights, and encourage investment in land improvement, with a Special Land Tribunal for dispute resolution.

Land administration in India is an intricate web of laws with a decentralized structure, where power is divided among the Union (central) government, state governments, and local bodies. This approach ensures a tailored approach to land management across diverse regions. At the national level, central laws like the Registration Act (1908), the Transfer of Property Act (1882), and the Hindu Succession Act (1956) establish a broad framework for land administration in India. These acts cover crucial aspects such as land ownership rights, procedures for property transfers, and inheritance laws related to land.

However, state governments possess the authority to enact their own legislation concerning land-related matters within their respective jurisdictions. This includes Land Revenue Acts, Land Reforms Acts, and region-specific laws tailored to the unique needs and conditions of each state. These state-level laws address a range of issues, including tenancy rights, agricultural land usage regulations, and restrictions or guidelines surrounding land transfers.

Adding another layer of complexity, local governing bodies like municipal corporations and panchayats may also implement regulations pertaining to land use within their designated jurisdictions. These can take the form of town planning laws or zoning regulations, ensuring orderly development and adherence to local land utilization norms. In India, the land administration system relies on three crucial processes: Record of Rights (ROR), Registration, and Adjudication. These work together to ensure clarity, security, and dispute resolution in land ownership.

State of Land Administration in India:

An effective land administration system treats land as a functional economic asset, enabling smooth transfers, access to land-based credit, and comprehensive record-keeping. The ideal scenario involves registration of all land transactions and accurate reflection of ownership changes in the Record of Rights (ROR). However, India's land administration faces significant hurdles like the lack of a robust ROR system in urban areas, inadequate record formats, cumbersome title verification processes, absence of a centralized litigation tracking system, and complex registration procedures. These inefficiencies have contributed to India's poor global ranking in ease of property registration.

The real cost manifests in overburdened courts grappling with a deluge of land disputes and backlogs within the revenue administration system. Antiquated laws and sluggish digitization have further compounded the challenges. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged strategy, starting with a comprehensive review and re-engineering of outdated laws and procedures. Priorities include creating a robust urban ROR system, integrating deed registries with RORs, enabling easy citizen access to land records, incorporating contact details for efficient communication, exploring online dispute resolution mechanisms, and leveraging public-private partnerships for enhanced efficiency.

Ultimately, India must shed its colonial-era land administration mindset and embrace innovative, citizen-centric reforms to build a system that fosters economic growth, secures land ownership, and minimizes land-related conflicts.

RURAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ITS CHALLENGES: A CASE FROM KARNATAKA

Rekha P S

Fellow CRISP, Karnataka

"A Gram Panchayat (GP) functionary aptly described the situation: "Consumers only consider a bar of chocolate as theirs until they open the wrapper and consume it. Once the product is consumed, the responsibility falls on the local government to dispose of the wrapper." **This succinctly captures the burden faced by GPs and the women handling the waste, while other stakeholders, including producers and distributors, shirk their responsibilities."**

Solid waste management (SWM) in rural settings, particularly in the Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) is a subject that typically fails to receive the attention it warrants. Waste management is often primarily associated with urban areas, leading us to instinctively perceive it as an urban-specific issue. It is often overlooked in rural areas, despite local governments allocating a significant portion of their budget towards waste management activities. A substantial financial strain is experienced by the Gram Panchayats (GPs) as they grapple with the escalating volume of waste produced in rural settings. In Karnataka, GPs spend between 1.5 lakhs to 2 lakhs annually to clear drains clogged by unmanaged waste.

Historically, the waste found in rural areas consisted mainly of agricultural byproducts, livestock waste, food waste, and a limited amount of recyclable waste such as paper. However, presently villages are no longer immune to the influx of fast-moving consumer products. Consequently, there has been a significant surge in the quantity of waste generated in the rural areas too due to the ever-increasing consumption of packaged goods. In the absence of an effective waste management infrastructure in the past, waste treatment and disposal in rural areas typically involved open burning and dumping, with some households disposing of high-value recyclables to Kabadiwalas. While some GPs have recognized the necessity of managing waste properly in light of the environmental and health risks they face, the waste collected is often ultimately dumped in landfills.

CRISP has been working on demonstrating Resource Clusters for SWM in rural areas, by supporting the Self–Help Group women providing these services to the GPs, particularly in Bagalkote district. The CRISP Karnataka team, along with its Research Associates stationed in GPs of Bagalkote, has facilitated the disposal of accumulated waste in GPs by creating a network of vendors, freeing up storage space, and generating revenue for SHG women providing waste management services. However, the challenge remains that only marketable hard plastics can be disposed of, while low-value plastic waste, which is generated in large quantities, is difficult to process further. Finding buyers for Multi-Layered Plastics (MLPs), which fall into this category, proves particularly challenging after segregation. Based on our experience in working with SHG women engaged in SWM, we find that only about 30% of the collected waste in rural areas is a marketable recyclable waste. The remaining 70% consists of waste that has no buyers. MLPs are not in demand because their recycling process is complex due to the multiple layers of plastic involved in it. Other examples of unmarketable waste include footwear, textile waste, and thermocol sheets.

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It is to be noted here that the challenge lies not in the absolute absence of recycling facilities for low-value plastic waste but in the volume of waste available. Unlike urban areas, waste generation in rural settings is sporadic and dispersed rather than concentrated in one locality. To facilitate aggregation and recycling, a significant volume of waste needs to be amassed. Another specific issue faced by the GPs, particularly the remote ones is the huge distances to be covered to access the nearby aggregation facilities located in the urban areas. This long-distance transportation involves substantial costs.

For waste categories that lack demand in the market, this poses a considerable financial burden on GPs and SHG women to manage them. On our visit to GPs in Kerala, we found that they spend between Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 per kilogram of unmarketable waste, sending it for incineration in cement factories through empanelled agencies. Similarly, GPs in Udupi and Dakshin Kannada encounter comparable challenges, spending between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 45,000 per truckload of reject waste to transport it to cement kilns situated in Kalaburgi for incineration. However, not all cement factories accept reject waste, that has no value in the market. Transporting waste to distant locations for incineration and the resultant carbon emissions contradict the principles and rationale of a decentralized waste management model.

The challenge with low-value plastics lies in aggregating sufficient volume for viable recycling. To address this, establishing a robust network of recyclers is crucial. Identifying and mapping recyclers capable of handling the majority of rural waste is essential to maximize material recovery and establish a closed-loop system aligned with circular economy principles.

In the absence of a recycling system for low-value plastics, local governments and SHG women involved in SWM operations face immense pressure to manage large volumes of unmarketable waste. This often compels them to resort to landfilling or burning, practices associated with significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These methods also have severe implications for the health and safety of those involved in SWM operations. Consequently, waste handlers and local governments bear the sole burden of managing unmarketable and non-recyclable waste, underscoring the urgent need for broader systemic solutions.

A GP functionary aptly described the situation: "Consumers only consider a bar of chocolate as theirs until they open the wrapper and consume it. Once the product is consumed, the responsibility falls on the local government to dispose of the wrapper." This example succinctly captures the burden faced by GPs and the women handling the waste, while other stakeholders, including the producers and distributors, shirk their responsibilities.

While the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in India applies to plastic and electronic waste, its implementation on the ground is lacking. The waste management system at GPs heavily relies on informal scrap dealers for waste collection. In rural areas, particularly for low-value plastic waste like MLPs, it is imperative for producers and brand owners to establish a collection system for segregated waste to facilitate recycling. Producers should bear the cost of gap funding to manage low-value plastic waste, ensuring the establishment of a collect-back system for such items. Our field observations show that certain brands are disproportionately responsible for Single-Use Plastic packaging waste. In such cases, a waste audit should be conducted, and these companies must be brought into the EPR fold to bear the responsibility for the collection and disposal of their packaging waste.

Solid waste management presents a multifaceted challenge and remains an evolving field. When SHG women are engaged as partners with GPs to address rural waste, it becomes imperative for the government to establish support systems to aid these entities in delivering effective SWM services. To address the financing gap, a state-level model can be considered to fund the processing of low-value plastic waste. This could involve leveraging EPR funds at a centralized level, with the allocated funds then directed towards financing SWM operations at the GP level through grants.

Solid waste management is not a static process. It is a journey that is continually evolving to meet new challenges and opportunities. As we embark on this journey, we need to set clear milestones and objectives, guided by thoughtful deliberation and informed decision-making.

FellowSpeak

Akho Phira
Fellow CRISP, Meghalaya

REFLECTION FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

Without a second thought, the nudge to give in full commitment comes from the sincerity and dedication led by the CRISP's Mentors at the helm. One of the biggest strengths of the Fellowship derives from the support and learnings from different state teams, state leads and fellows. Over the 18-month stint in Meghalaya, the Fellowship has opened numerous doors of opportunities from liaisoning with the state's chief political leaders and top bureaucrats & officials. Besides the prospects at the state, CRISP continue to create enabling spaces for the Fellows through expert talks, rigorous orientation and retreat experiences, publication of articles and papers, and connections with organisations and agencies pan-India.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD:

In my lens, the most important learnings of the Fellowship originate from the extensive field experiences as the first-hand interaction with multiple stakeholders at different levels from District, Block & Village are critical in deriving my insights to make informed policy documents. The field interface has naturally boosted my confidence with the support of employing uncompromised real-time data. This experience has not only enabled my journey to provide field voices to the officials and leaders at the state but more importantly, it has reiterated the need to nurture Community Champions in the village and communities for driving development. Engaging primarily with the Community & Rural Development aspect, the Fellowship experience has become more enriching through the constant engagement with Education and Social Welfare components as all these verticals are interrelated in achieving holistic development and drivers of change.

Major Developments in CRISP

CRISP Secretary R. Subrahmanyam Meets Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman: Focus on Education Sector Initiatives

In a recent meeting, R. Subramanyam IAS (Retd.), Secretary of the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP), briefed Honourable Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the organization's mission and actions across India. The discussion highlighted CRISP's significant efforts in improving the quality of education in various states.

Minister Sitharaman commended CRISP for its impactful initiatives in the education sector, particularly appreciating their efforts to enhance educational quality nationwide. She emphasized the importance of developing students' critical thinking abilities, urging CRISP to continue its focus in this area.

Subramanyam also participated in a pre-budget consultation meeting where a comprehensive 10-point program aimed at advancing the education sector was presented. The proposal outlined strategic measures to further strengthen educational outcomes and support socio-economic progress through enhanced learning frameworks and resources.

CRISP in Action

▶ RURAL DEVELOPMENT

◉ Tamil Nadu

Strategic Planning with the Rural Development Department

On June 5th, the CRISP Tamil Nadu team held a pivotal meeting with the Rural Development Department of Tamil Nadu. The session was attended by esteemed CRISP representatives and the department's nodal officers. The focal point of the discussion was to outline and strategise the action plan for CRISP's initiatives. The meeting was a significant step towards aligning CRISP's objectives with the state's rural development goals—the dialogue emphasised a collaborative approach to enhance rural infrastructure and socio-economic conditions. The nodal officers praised CRISP's innovative strategies and assured full support from the department. This cooperative effort marks a cornerstone in fortifying the foundation of rural development projects, ensuring that they are well-coordinated, impactful, and sustainable.

Field Visit to Chengalpattu District

In a proactive stride towards understanding local challenges, the CRISP Tamil Nadu team conducted its first field visit to the Chengalpattu district. This visit, aimed at analysing the housing policy issues faced by the local communities, was a significant milestone. The team engaged with community members, listened to their concerns, and gathered valuable insights. The visit highlighted the pressing need for improved housing technologies tailored to the rural context. The CRISP team's observations are now set to fuel the development of innovative housing solutions that can be replicated across Tamil Nadu. This hands-on approach underlines CRISP's commitment to creating practical, community-centric solutions that address real-world problems.

Coordination with IIT Madras and Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

On June 13th, the CRISP team coordinated a comprehensive meeting with the IIT Madras regional coordinator of the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) and the Directorate of Rural Development, Tamil Nadu. The primary objective was to engage UBA participating institutions in improving sanitation at the gram panchayat level. Mr. Prasant IAS, ADRD General, presented a detailed PowerPoint on the current sanitation situation, highlighting critical areas for improvement. This meeting was instrumental in forging stronger ties between academic institutions and rural development bodies. The collaboration aims to leverage academic expertise and innovative research to enhance sanitation infrastructure and practices in rural areas, thereby improving the quality of life for village residents.

Collaboration with UNICEF Chennai

On June 18th, the CRISP team met with UNICEF Chennai's Social Policy Officer, Mr. Biju Mushahary. The discussion centred around potential collaborations between CRISP and UNICEF on projects related to social protection and decentralised governance. The meeting converged shared visions for advancing social policies that safeguard and empower vulnerable populations. Mr. Mushahary emphasised UNICEF's commitment to these causes and expressed enthusiasm for the synergies between the two organisations. This collaboration is poised to enhance the efficacy and reach of social protection programs, ensuring that governance is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all community members.

Karnataka

CRISP Karnataka Team Embarks on a Study of RSETIs in Karnataka

The CRISP KA team is designing a comprehensive study to analyse the performance and functioning of Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) in Karnataka. Managed by banks, and supported by the Union and State governments, these institutes have trained lakhs of youth in over sixty skill areas. Karnataka has 31 RSETIs which collectively train around 25000 candidates each year. In this context, the National Livelihood Mission, Karnataka has entrusted CRISP with this study, focusing primarily on the impact of training on the settlement of the trained candidates. The planned study will use trainee data from 2018-2023 to trace the trained candidates in districts sampled for the study. Secondary data analysis using the data provided by the RSETIs for these years will also be a part of the report to be submitted to the department.

As part of the study, the CRISP Karnataka Team conducted a scoping visit to the place where the concept of RSETI was born - Rural Development and Self-Employment Training Institute (RUDSETI) in Ujire, Dakshina Kannada. In 2008-09, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India accepted the concept of RUDSETI, and as of now, there are 591 such institutes across the country.

The Team interacted with the Director, Mr. M Suresh, and faculty member Mr. Abraham James, who provided valuable insights into the functioning of the institute, during which issues and challenges related to the mobilization, training, handholding and settlement of the candidates were discussed. The Director appreciated CRISP's efforts in conducting the study and offered suggestions to improve the training model. Further, the Team interacted with Mr. Giridhar Kallapur, Executive Director of the RUDSETI Central Secretariat, during which the Secretariat's role in monitoring the RUDSETIs, and the management of MIS data were discussed.

The visit was highly effective as it will be instrumental in the design of the study by CRISP. The insights gained from the visit will help in finalising the questionnaire and sampling frame for the survey of candidates trained at RSETIs in Karnataka.

**Government of Karnataka's Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Raj Fellowship -
CRISP Karnataka Team Helps Plan and Lead the Orientation for 44 Fellows**

The orientation training for the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Raj Fellowship for Kalyana Karnataka began on June 3, 2024, at the Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (ANSSIRD & PR) in Mysore. Forty-four fellows participated in this intensive training programme, designed to provide in-depth knowledge and skills on various aspects of the Panchayat Raj System and Rural Development.

The training, which spanned three weeks, featured sessions led by over 30 resource persons and domain experts. CRISP Karnataka mentor, Mr. S. M. Vijayanand, also spoke to the fellows about their role as Rajiv Gandhi Fellows and covered the topics of good governance and GP-SHG convergence. CRISP played a crucial role in planning and managing the orientation training along with the department. CRISP, along with the Programme Management Unit, planned and organized a variety of activities for the fellows to ensure a holistic learning experience. The team also accompanied the fellows on field visits to Gram Panchayats in Kerala and Karnataka, intended to enhance their practical understanding of the various concepts learned during the classroom sessions and of rural governance at large.

As part of the orientation, the CRISP team conducted a session covering the implementation aspects of the three flagship programmes: Rural Libraries (Arivu Kendra), Crèches (Koosina Mane), and Solid Waste Management. These sessions provided the fellows with insights into how these initiatives are being implemented and managed at the field level.

A significant component of the orientation training is the four-week field immersion, which aims to give fellows hands-on experience. The CRISP team briefed the fellows on how to effectively undertake their immersion exercises, ensuring they are well-prepared to apply their knowledge during the course of their Fellowship. Following the month-long field immersion (two weeks in well-performing districts, and two weeks in the Kalyana Karnataka districts), the Fellows will return to ANSSIRD&PR in Mysore for a two-week debrief session and completion of their training before heading to their allotted Taluks/Districts for the two-year Fellowship.

For the CRISP team, the entire process - from planning to assisting and attending the orientation programme has been an immersive and enriching experience. We look forward to supporting both the department and the newly recruited fellows as they embark on this exciting journey!

Meghalaya

Strengthening Village Level Development Plan (VLDP)

As part of the Hub & Spoke Model under CRISP's School of Practice, a Convergence Camp was organised by The Block Development Office of Sohiong Block, East Khasi Hills in collaboration with Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLS) and Centre for Research in Schemes & Policies (CRISP) at Madan Bitaw village on 14th June 2024. The event was graced by Shri Synshar Lyngdoh, MLA Sohiong Constituency as the Chief Guest and Shri C J K Warjri, BDO, Sohiong Block as the Guest of Honour in the presence of 23-line departments from the Block and District with a total of 77 participants. Apart from the government departments, the event received the participation of other agencies viz. - Smart Village Movement (SVM) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS). The event was a grand success by facilitating an enabling interface between line departments and community members to connect multiple agencies to solve grassroots issues and demands to achieve inclusive development. While the Camp is an achievement, more importantly, the significant shift in preparing demands and plan prioritisation through the Development Status Report (DSR) led by the Village Level Planning Facilitating Team (VLPFT) which encapsulates holistic planning through inclusive participation by utilising real-time-field data to construct informed decisions for diverse sectors viz. Education, health, livelihoods, water, child and women-friendly spaces, among others.

Exposure Visit of CRISP Assam Team to Meghalaya

The dynamic Assam team, led by Shri Mukesh Agarwal, IPS (retd) - State Lead, 2 CRISP Fellows and 3 Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Fellows carried out a 2 Day exposure visit to Meghalaya from 29th - 30th May 2024. The primary objective of the visit was focused towards learning the operations and functioning of Meghalaya State Social Audit & Transparency (MSSAT) which was ushered by in-depth discussions with the State Officials of the MSSAT Team at Shillong followed by a rigorous field visit to Mawphlang Block to participate in the Public Hearings of different schemes viz. ICDS, CLLMP, PDS, etc coupled with interactions with community stakeholders, implementing agency officials, and MSSAT team members from District, Block and Village.

▶ **HIGHER EDUCATION**

◉ Madhya Pradesh

Transforming Higher Education in Madhya Pradesh with AEDPs

In a significant step toward enhancing employability and bridging the skills gap, a collaborative meeting was held on May 27, 2024, involving key stakeholders from the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP), the Department of Higher Education Madhya Pradesh, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), Universities, and 53 Government Colleges in the state. The focus of this meeting was the implementation of Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programs (AEDPs) under the National Initiative for Skill Integrated Higher Education (NISHE).

Shri. Nishant Warwade IAS, Commissioner of Higher Education, MP, introduced CRISP and emphasized its objectives, highlighting the importance of prioritizing student interests in shaping the AEDPs, as discussed with principals and vice-chancellors. Shri. VLVSS Subba Rao, National Lead NISHE, elaborated on AEDPs, which aim to integrate industry-demanded skills into general degree programs, initially focusing on six sectors—Retail, Logistics, BFSI, Healthcare, Life Sciences, Management, and Entrepreneurship in Madhya Pradesh. The successful implementation of AEDPs depends on University approvals and Principal motivation.

Shri. Radhey Shyam Julaniya, IAS (Retd.), State Mentor MP, emphasized CRISP's pro bono approach and commitment to societal welfare, advising the 53 nominated government colleges to select AEDPs based on their capacity and capability, with batch sizes of 40-50 students, and offering existing enrollees the option to join AEDPs in the second semester. He also stressed the importance of principals' leadership and communication with CRISP. Shri. K.C. Gupta IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, introduced the role of SSCs in curriculum design and skill identification, referencing the *Seekho aur Kamao Yojana,* which exemplifies the potential impact of apprentices earning Rs 8,000 to 10,000 per month.

Key implementation directions include the selection of AEDP courses by Colleges and Universities, finalisation of Champions, Curriculum Approval by BoS, Signing of MoU between SSC & MP Higher Education Department and Colleges, Training of Trainers, etc. To speed up the process, it was directed to open the Vikalp Portal for student enrolment and initial support from SSCs and CRISP would be provided. The Program will be expanded to 50 more colleges in the coming months. This collaborative effort aims to revolutionize higher education in Madhya Pradesh, equipping students with practical skills and enhancing their employability.

 Uttar Pradesh

CRISP Achievements Highlighted in a Strategic Meeting Led by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh

In a pivotal meeting held on June 10, 2024, Professor (Dr.) D.P. Singh presented a comprehensive overview of CRISP's achievements and ongoing initiatives. The meeting, presided over by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Yogi Adityanath and attended by the council of ministers, focused on a strategic agenda aimed at propelling the state's economy to $1 trillion.

Capacity Building Workshop on NAAC Accreditation

The CRISP-UP team participated in a workshop on NAAC accreditation held at Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow, under the leadership of the Honorable Chancellor. The team diligently prepared and submitted a list of 30 colleges in Lucknow with which CRISP is collaborating under the UP Higher Education Department, and these colleges also attended the workshop.

Field Visiting and Meeting with Stakeholders

The CRISP-UP team met with the Regional Higher Education Officer (RHEO) to explain the AEDPs. They had an in-depth discussion on the program's feasibility, outreach, advertisement, and outcomes. CRISP submitted a financial viability report and roadmap for the colleges.

The CRISP-UP team visited T.S. Mishra University and met with Vice Chancellor Dr. Prashant Trivedi (IAS, Retd.). Detailed discussions regarding the AEDP programs were held with the VC. The team also met Dr. Hemendra Sharma, the Director of the School of Business Management. The University agreed to offer BBA Logistics, BBA E-commerce, BBA BFSI, and BBA Healthcare. The university would sign the MoU after meeting the SSCs and commence admission in the academic year.

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