

CRISP MAASAM

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Monthly Account of Achievements,
Successes and Memories

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The learning lens

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DECENTRALIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF VILLAGE COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES (VCDCS) UNDER THE BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL (BTC), ASSAM



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Through a structured analysis of a pioneering capacity-building initiative for Village Council Development Committees (VCDCs) under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), this report explores how decentralised governance in Sixth Schedule areas can be strengthened. The author combines **contextual background, training design, participation data, and field-level observations to assess effectiveness and identify gaps — particularly gender imbalance and fiscal constraints** — while underscoring the transformative potential of empowered local leadership in tribal regions.

Introduction

Decentralized governance has been globally promoted as an essential mechanism for ensuring participatory democracy, inclusive development, and accountable administration (Ribot, 2002; Manor, 1999). In India's northeastern region, particularly in tribal-majority areas governed under the Sixth Schedule, decentralized institutions like Village Councils are fundamental to maintaining socio-political stability and facilitating development.

The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) administers the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), with Village Council Development Committees (VCDCs) acting as local self-governing bodies at the village level. However, capacity gaps among VCDC leadership have often been cited as barriers to effective decentralized governance (Baruah, 2021). Against this backdrop, the VCDC Capacity Building Training aimed to address knowledge and skills deficits among newly elected VCDC officials. This study analyzes the training program to assess its effectiveness, participation patterns, and the lessons it offers for future policy and practice.

Strengthening grassroots governance in Sixth Schedule Areas

The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution envisages autonomy for tribal areas through the establishment of District and Regional Councils empowered with legislative, judicial, and executive functions. Within this framework, village-level institutions like VDCs are tasked with planning and executing development activities according to local needs.



However, studies have noted that such institutions often suffer from:

- A lack of administrative and financial literacy among elected members (Hazarika, 2007).
- Limited exposure to participatory planning frameworks (UNDP, 2009).
- Weak accountability mechanisms, leading to elite capture (Baviskar, 2004).

Recognizing these challenges, capacity-building programs are critical interventions to enable village councils to function effectively and foster democratic deepening at the grassroots.

Capacity building of local governance leaders in rural areas, especially in Sixth Schedule regions like the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), is therefore essential for strengthening

grassroots democracy and promoting inclusive development. In these areas, governance structures are deeply intertwined with the unique cultural, ethnic, and social contexts of indigenous communities. Equipping VDC members and other local leaders with skills in planning, financial management, and participatory decision-making ensures that development initiatives are more responsive, transparent, and sustainable. Moreover, given the autonomy granted under the Sixth Schedule, local institutions bear a greater responsibility for delivering essential services, safeguarding rights, and fostering socio-economic growth. Capacity building empowers leaders to navigate administrative processes, manage resources effectively, and articulate community needs in policy forums. It also fosters accountability and reduces dependency on external actors, enabling true self-governance. Strengthening local capacities is, therefore, critical to realizing the constitutional vision of empowering marginalized communities through decentralized, people-centric governance.

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Moreover, given the autonomy granted under the Sixth Schedule, local institutions bear greater responsibility for delivering essential services, safeguarding rights, and fostering socio-economic growth. Capacity building empowers leaders to navigate administrative processes, manage resources effectively, and articulate community needs in policy forums. It also fosters accountability and reduces dependency on external actors, enabling true self-governance. Strengthening local capacities is, therefore, critical to realizing the constitutional vision of empowering marginalized communities through decentralized, people-centric governance

MoU between Govt of BTR and CRISP

The Government of BTC and the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on February 22, 2024, to strengthen the governance systems of the Bodoland Territorial Region for effective implementation of schemes and policies—especially in the social sector—and thereby ensure large-scale welfare gains. Among the nine focus areas, one key point highlighted the strengthening of grassroots governance by building the capacities of the Village Council Development Committees (VCDCs) to enable effective planning and implementation of schemes.



Training of VCDCs in Bodoland



To enhance the capacities of the Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) leadership under the BTC, a five-day training program was organized in December 2024 in collaboration with CRISP and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). This program trained various government officials, college teachers, and professionals to act as Master Trainers (MTs) for the training of VCDC office bearers/members.

Subsequently, a structured three-day training program was conducted from April 23 to April 25, 2025, across the five districts of the BTC. The

training was delivered by the aforementioned MTs. The exercise was coordinated by the respective Block Development Officers (BDOs), under the supervision of senior BTC officials and in close cooperation with the CRISP-BTR team.

The objective of the training was to empower the Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, and Members of the VCDCs to effectively discharge their roles and responsibilities, improve decentralized governance, promote local-level planning, and ensure better delivery of government schemes and services.

Core training areas included:

- **Introduction to Rural Development in Assam and BTR & Good Governance:**
Sessions focused on principles of transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making. Participants explored how to apply these principles within the VCDC framework.
- **Financial Management in Sixth Schedule Areas:**
Participants were trained on navigating and leveraging the provisions of the Sixth Schedule for local development, with a focus on administrative and financial frameworks unique to the BTC.
- **Communication and Effective Leadership:**
Leadership modules cultivated visionary, inclusive leaders capable of inspiring their communities and driving change.
- **Localizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
Practical strategies were discussed to align local development plans with global SDG targets in areas like education, health, and environmental management.
- **Community Development:**
Tools and techniques were shared to foster community engagement, a cornerstone of decentralized governance.

- **Social Inclusion:**
Emphasis was placed on building inclusive governance structures that accommodate marginalized groups for equitable development.
- **Poverty Alleviation:**
Strategies included targeted interventions and livelihood enhancement programs.
- **Health and Sanitation:**
Practical approaches for improving health outcomes and sanitation infrastructure were discussed.

Participation and Observations

The training was decentralized, conducted in 13 centers across five districts. Trainees were assigned centers based on proximity, while MTs were allocated by district.

On Day 1, training sessions were conducted across 11 centers with 42 MTs. This marked a significant milestone as the first decentralized training initiative of such scale in any Sixth Schedule area in India. Training continued in 9 centers across four districts on Day 2, and concluded on Day 3 in 2 centers—one each in Udalguri and Kokrajhar districts.

| Day | Date | Total Centres | Total MTs | Total Attendance |
|-----|------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1 | 23/04/2025 | 11 | 42 | 378 |
| 2 | 24/04/2025 | 9 | 32 | 304 |
| 3 | 25/04/2025 | 2 | 8 | 53 |

Women's Participation

A key observation from the training sessions was the low participation of women—only 59 in total. This highlights a significant gender imbalance in grassroots governance representation in BTC. Despite constitutional provisions and policy efforts to enhance women's participation, traditional socio-cultural norms, limited access to resources, and systemic barriers continue to hinder women's political empowerment in Bodoland.

Another notable observation was the active engagement of VCDC members. Participants demonstrated awareness of various government schemes and policies, reflecting their growing involvement in governance processes. However, they also expressed concerns regarding the lack of direct financial allocations to VCDCs. This limitation hampers their operational autonomy and decision-making power, ultimately impacting decentralization and the efficiency of local governance in Bodoland.

| Sl. No. | Districts | Name of Centre | Women Participants |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Kokrajhar | Dotma Dev. Block office hall | 2 |
| 2 | | Gossaigaon Dev Block Office, Gossaigaon | 13 |
| 3 | | CMTC Kokrajhar | 12 |
| 4 | Chirang | SIRD Extension training Centre, Chirang | Training postponed |
| 5 | | Boro Bazar TD Block, Chirang | 5 |
| 6 | Baksa | Handloom & textile Baksa | 2 |
| 7 | | Barama College,Baksa | 1 |
| 8 | Tamulpur | Tamulpur dev Block Office | Training postponed |
| 9 | | CMTC-Nagrijiuli-ASRLM -BMMU Office | 2 |
| 10 | | Goreswar Dev Block office,Tamulpur | 3 |
| 11 | Udalguri | Udalguri Dev Block Hall | 3 |
| 12 | | Rowta Dev. Block Office | 1 |
| 13 | | Mazbat Dev. block office | 4 |
| 14 | | Khalaigaon Dev Block | 3 |
| 15 | | Bhergaon Dev Block | 8 |
| Total Women Participants | | | 59 |

Relevance of the Training Program

The VCDC training program in Bodoland is critically relevant to deepening grassroots governance in Sixth Schedule areas. While the Sixth Schedule provides a legal framework for autonomy, this autonomy is meaningful only when local representatives are empowered to exercise their powers effectively.

By addressing gaps in administrative literacy, planning, financial management, and participatory governance, the training enabled VCDC members to play a more proactive role in local development. Aligning village-level initiatives with SDGs, promoting inclusivity, and embedding accountability mechanisms collectively strengthen bottom-up democratic processes.

Importantly, the training reduced dependence on bureaucratic structures and provided tools for more effective welfare scheme implementation. Modules on leadership and social inclusion also laid the groundwork for more representative institutions, although gender disparities remain a pressing concern.

In a post-conflict context like Bodoland, such initiatives enhance governance efficiency, rebuild institutional trust, and serve as scalable models for tribal self-governance across other Sixth Schedule regions in Northeast India.



Conclusion

The multi-phase capacity-building initiative—comprising a five-day Master Trainer workshop followed by a three-day VCDC leadership training—demonstrates the potential of structured interventions within the Sixth Schedule framework to strengthen local governance.

However, two critical constraints emerged: the significant underrepresentation of women and the lack of direct fiscal transfers to VCDCs. Addressing these issues requires targeted policy reforms. Integrating such reforms into BTC's governance architecture offers a replicable model for advancing decentralization and grassroots empowerment in other tribal regions across India.

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LAYING THE FOUNDATION: THE ROLE OF WASTE AUDITS IN RURAL INDIA'S WASTE MANAGEMENT



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Rural areas often lack regular waste collection services, resulting in open dumping, groundwater contamination, and environmental degradation. These challenges are not just about infrastructure gaps—they reflect a deeper lack of data, planning, and community engagement. Waste is still widely seen as an urban issue, leaving rural realities overlooked. **By identifying what waste is generated, in what quantity, and where, waste audits bring visibility to rural waste streams and help create local solutions through informed decision-making,** better infrastructure planning, and community awareness.

According to the guidelines on solid waste management by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), waste characterisation and waste audit is the process of segregating, collecting, and analysing the quantity and composition of waste generated. It is essential for planning treatment and disposal facilities. Waste audits help identify the dominant waste streams and opportunities for recovery, recycling, and reduction.

Waste characterisation and audit are the first steps toward understanding the quantity and composition of waste generated over a specific period. Waste audits involve collecting representative samples of waste from households, commercial areas, and institutions. The collected waste is sorted into categories (biodegradable, plastic, paper, glass, metal, ash, etc.) to measure volumes or weight.

Data from waste audits help design infrastructure for waste processing, recycling, composting, and disposal. Why should we emphasize local-level audits? To understand the importance, let us look at a few statistics related to waste management in rural panchayats.

Rural India produces approximately 0.3 to 0.4 million metric tonnes of solid waste per day, predominantly organic in nature. A study by Pratham indicates that basic waste management systems, such as waste bins and community waste vehicles, are present in less than 40% of the villages studied. In states like West Bengal, Assam, Punjab, and Bihar, the percentage of villages with mechanisms to manage solid waste is 0.82%, 1.08%, 1.67%, and 1.97%, respectively.

The government has initiated programs like the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), which continues to focus on enhancing waste management infrastructure and promoting sustainable sanitation practices in rural areas. Still, certain challenges persist.



Many rural areas lack regular waste collection services, leading to the accumulation of waste in open areas. This can cause the release of methane, groundwater contamination, and biodiversity loss. A significant portion of waste collected is not processed due to a lack of facilities, resulting in open dumping and environmental hazards.



Waste is often perceived as an urban problem, leading to neglect in rural waste management strategies. Community events in rural areas, such as marriages, produce large quantities of single-use plastic, as it is a cheaper alternative. Even though there are waste collection facilities in rural areas of India, the number of rural households that practice waste segregation at the source is low, according to statistics from the Tamil Nadu SBM department. This hinders effective recycling and composting efforts.

Another major challenge is the lack of comprehensive information regarding waste management. The CPCB does not differentiate between urban and rural data, and state governments rely on data provided by functionaries on the ground. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are limited.

Waste is openly burned across India each year, primarily in rural areas and urban slums. This practice releases harmful pollutants, adversely affecting the health of local communities and contributing to climate change. The existing Air Quality Index (AQI) serves as compelling evidence. Improper waste disposal can also harm wildlife; for instance, the ingestion of plastic waste by animals can be fatal. Informal waste workers often operate without protective gear or access to healthcare, exposing themselves to hazardous conditions. Poor waste management practices lead to environmental degradation and public health issues, incurring significant economic costs.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including infrastructure development, community engagement, policy enforcement, and accurate data collection. The first step toward this can be a waste audit.

Importance of Waste Audit

Conducting a waste audit is important because it provides a clear, data-driven understanding of waste generation patterns. This knowledge is the foundation for effective waste management strategies.

Waste management efforts cannot be effective without knowing what kind of waste is being generated (organic, plastic, ash, paper, etc.) and in what amounts. For example, a rural area may generate a large amount of ash from cooking fires or agricultural activities. If this is unknown, no specific treatment facility would be in place to handle this waste safely. A waste audit highlights such overlooked waste categories. By understanding waste volumes and types, panchayats can plan suitable infrastructure.

The audit process also creates awareness among residents about waste segregation and encourages participation in sustainable practices and safe waste disposal. Segregation at the source and proper handling can reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills, save costs, and reduce environmental pollution.



Accurate data from audits inform policymakers about hidden waste categories and foster greater accountability and monitoring. It can even support the success of programmes like the Swachh Bharat Mission by aiding in the planning of more effective waste management practices tailored to rural settings.

Who Can Conduct a Waste Audit and How?

Waste audits can be conducted by trained personnel from government agencies, non-governmental organisations, or local community groups. They follow these basic steps:

- **Planning:** Define the area and time period for the audit and predefine the categories of waste.
- **Collection:** Gather all the waste generated during this period from households, businesses, and public spaces.
- **Sorting:** Separate the waste into predefined categories.
- **Weighing and Recording:** Measure the weight or volume of each category and record the data.
- **Analysis and Reporting:** Analyse the data to identify waste generation patterns and provide recommendations for better waste management.

While waste audits are recognised as a valuable tool for effective waste management, their practice in India is currently limited. A performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on solid waste management in Andhra Pradesh highlighted that while waste collection coverage was about 100%, the processing of waste was significantly lower. The report emphasised the need for better waste characterisation and audits to improve processing rates.

Despite such observations, there are currently no standardised guidelines for conducting waste audits in India. There is a need for increased awareness, standardised methodologies, and resource allocation to promote widespread adoption of waste audits across various sectors.

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FellowSpeak

*Inside Bodoland:**Lessons in Identity, Administration, and Aspiration*

When I first stepped into the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) as a CRISP Fellow, I was entering more than just a geographic space—I was stepping into a living legacy of resilience. I didn't speak Boro, nor was I from the community. I wondered whether I could truly connect, contribute, or even belong to the populace. But over the past year, what unfolded was not just a professional placement—it was a transformation, one that has reshaped how I view identity, governance, and the purpose of public service.

Under the visionary mentorship of Shri R. Subrahmanyam Sir and the steadfast guidance of my State Lead, Mukesh Agarwal Sir, I was equipped not just with direction but with the courage to ask difficult questions and the humility to listen deeply. Their unwavering support allowed me to navigate the complex administrative terrain of a Sixth Schedule area—one often overlooked in mainstream discourse and misunderstood outside Assam. It was through their belief in our work that I began to see the contours of a governance story still being written—one shaped by history, yes, but also by aspiration and innovation.

What moved me most in Bodoland was not only its political significance or administrative uniqueness, but the everyday dignity of its people. I remember walking from school to school during a drop-out rate survey in Kokrajhar, speaking with parents, children, and teachers. These were not just data points—we were hearing the quiet heartbreaks behind absenteeism: economic hardship, unsafe commutes, fragile infrastructure, and dreams deferred. These conversations, spoken sometimes in halting Assamese or through interpreters, taught me that connection isn't always about language. It's about presence. Listening. And showing up without assumptions.

Professionally, the experience has been deeply grounding. I immersed myself in studying the administrative framework of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), a Sixth Schedule institution steadily advancing toward digital governance. One of our most fulfilling interventions was facilitating a capacity-building cascade in collaboration with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). Through this, Master Trainers were trained to engage over 1,200 Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) members across all five districts. Alongside this, I partnered with Kudumbashree-NRO for their scoping study in BTR, journeying through remote villages to understand the potential of community-based institutions and Self Help Groups.

Each policy move, each field visit, each discussion became a stitch in the fabric of this evolving administrative story. This fellowship has affirmed something powerful for me: that governance is not built in silos or offices alone. It's built in the quiet strength of communities, the trust earned over shared meals, the resilience in children who walk miles to school, and the elders who remember why autonomy matters. Despite our linguistic and cultural differences, I was not just tolerated—I was welcomed, challenged, and trusted. And in turn, I offered not just skills, but solidarity.

My journey in Bodoland is one I carry forward with deep gratitude. It taught me that the most enduring change happens when we walk with communities, not ahead of them. The wisdom I gained belongs not just to me, but to the people who shared it with grace and hope. And in that exchange, I found not just learning, but belonging.



Major developments at CRISP

► HIGHER EDUCATION

CHEQUE Project



Telangana

Online Inaugural Meeting of CHEQUE Project Held at Kakatiya University

Kakatiya University hosted the online inaugural meeting of the CHEQUE (Centre for Higher Education Quality Upgradation and Excellence) Project on 16th May 2025, chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof. K. Pratap Reddy. The event brought together key academicians to discuss strategies for enhancing quality in higher education. With active participation from principals and IQAC coordinators of 23 affiliated colleges, the meeting emphasized the CHEQUE Project's goal of transforming these institutions into model colleges. The session concluded with a shared commitment to collaboratively advance the standards of higher education in the region.



Academic Mentors' Visits Strengthen Quality Initiatives Across Universities

As part of the CHEQUE Project, academic mentors from Kakatiya University, Satavahana University, and Osmania University have been actively visiting their respective affiliated colleges to support and strengthen quality enhancement efforts. To date, 51 colleges have been visited, and the institutions have responded positively to the guidance provided. These visits focus on assessing academic and administrative practices, providing constructive feedback, and guiding institutions in aligning with the project's objectives. By engaging with faculty, IQAC teams, and administrative staff, mentors are fostering a culture of

continuous improvement and promoting the adoption of best practices. Their efforts are playing a vital role in transforming these colleges into model institutions of academic excellence across the region.



Uttar Pradesh



Prof. Balraj Chauhan, State Lead of CRISP Uttar Pradesh, delivered the Chief Guest address on the topic "Strengthening the Rule of Law through Principled Criminalisation" at the Annual Meeting of the Advocate Council, held at Sai Law College, Barabanki, on 25th May 2025.

Academic Mentor's Engagement under the CHEQUE Project for Higher Education Enhancement

As part of the CHEQUE (Centre for Higher Education Quality Upgradation and Excellence) project under CRISP, Prof. A. M. Saxena actively engaged with college principals and core committee members during institutional visits. These interactions focused on the strategic implementation of quality enhancement measures, with accreditation as a key objective.

Discussions emphasized the pivotal role of institutional leadership—particularly principals and IQAC members—in driving academic reforms and fostering a culture of excellence.

Key focus areas included:

- Aligning curriculum development with ongoing faculty training
- Adopting outcome-based education models
- Reinforcing internal quality assurance systems
- Leveraging digital tools to enhance both teaching and administrative processes

Prof. Saxena provided guidance on identifying institutional gaps, setting clear short- and long-term goals, and promoting stakeholder involvement.

The sessions also highlighted the need for structured documentation, continuous monitoring, and the creation of an inclusive academic environment that engages students, alumni, and industry partners. These collaborative efforts aim to build resilient, quality-driven academic ecosystems capable of meeting evolving national standards and enriching the student learning experience.



CHEQUE PROJECT : Experiences and Reflections

Prof. Divya Nath, Academic Mentor, Bundelkhand University, Jhansi.

The CHEQUE Project (Centre for Higher Education Quality Upgradation and Excellence) is a pilot initiative launched by CRISP across seven universities in India—three of which are in Uttar Pradesh. Following our orientation at the MCRHRD Training Institute in Hyderabad, each of us was assigned fifteen colleges from our respective institutions. Between May and early June, I conducted on-site visits to assess their readiness and willingness to engage with the project.

Of the fifteen colleges, eight were aided, five were self-financed, and two were government-run. While most principals and faculty demonstrated enthusiasm for the CHEQUE objectives and committed to full cooperation, significant disparities quickly became apparent. Many institutions lacked essential infrastructure, sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff, motivating incentives, and development funds. Government colleges often operated without a permanent principal, and aided colleges relied heavily on self-finance courses for survival. Self-financed colleges, meanwhile, struggled with low enrollments, high faculty turnover, and uneven educational quality.

Based on baseline data and these observations, ten colleges were selected to move forward. Each was asked to complete a SWOC analysis, which has guided the identification of priority areas for improvement. Common challenges include chronic staff shortages, inadequate library resources, and declining student numbers following NEP implementation. Management attitudes varied widely, influencing each college's progress.

To strengthen higher education quality across these institutions, a multi-pronged approach is needed:

- Consolidated Affiliations: Smaller universities with geographically clustered colleges should be the norm.
- Regulated Self-Finance Expansion: New self-financed colleges should open only where there is genuine demand and must adhere to rigorous standards.
- Staffing and Funding: All vacant teaching and administrative posts in government and aided colleges must be filled, with grants tied to performance. Annual library-upgradation funds should be guaranteed.
- Accountability and Professional Development: Institutes should adopt a six-hour biometric attendance policy; teacher training and pedagogical workshops should be regular, with promotions linked to demonstrated performance.
- Cross-Sector Collaboration: Exchanges between government-college staff (rule-savvy) and self-finance staff (market-oriented and tech-savvy) would foster mutual learning.

The CHEQUE Project represents a crucial step toward elevating higher education in India. Its long-term success, however, will depend on the collective commitment of all stakeholders—only with genuine will and coordinated effort can we ensure every institution delivers the quality education our students deserve.



► INCLUSIVE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM

ILP - BRAC Project

CRISP Participates in First Annual Partners' Meet on Inclusive Livelihoods Programme

The first Annual Partners' Meet of the Inclusive Livelihoods Programme, hosted by BRAC in collaboration with IWWAGE, held in New Delhi from May 12 to 14, 2025. The convening marked a major milestone in the implementation of Samaveshi Aajeevika—a flagship pilot initiative under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). The initiative is aimed at promoting the economic inclusion of India's most vulnerable households through targeted support, coaching, and systemic reform.



CRISP, as a key technical partner, joined over 50 participants from across India, including national and state-level implementation organisations and other research institutions. Our team contributed to critical discussions on monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems, bringing evidence to the design and scaling of inclusive livelihood strategies.

Other partners present included J-PAL South Asia, IMAGO Global Grassroots, ISEC Bangalore, and implementation organisations such as PRADAN, Trickle Up, Aga Khan Foundation, and Indian Grameen Services. BRAC's team continues to provide technical and coordination support across five states (Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu), anchoring the program with a strong foundation in the Graduation Approach.

The programme blends livelihood support, social protection, gender and social inclusion, climate resilience, and coaching to create pathways out of poverty.

In her remarks, Shweta S. Banerjee, India Country Lead at BRAC, highlighted the spirit of collaboration. Radha Chellappa, Executive Director of IWWAGE, reiterated the importance of gender-responsive programming and the potential of cross-state learning. Government leaders emphasized the strategic direction of the programme. Ms. Smriti Sharan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, noted:

"Individualised, targeted support—not just SHG inclusion—is essential. Your efforts are central to translating this vision into a scalable national strategy."

Mr. Shailesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, announced that the pilots have already reached 48,000 households, and shared plans to formalise a dedicated sub-scheme, Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana.

Sessions during the 3-day event covered the programme's core themes—Livelihoods & Climate Resilience, Gender & Social Inclusion, Coaching & Capacity Building, and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning. These discussions offered valuable opportunities for CRISP to engage with state teams, share insights, and align on priorities for implementation and impact measurement.

Mr. S M Vijayanand, Former Chief Secretary of Kerala, aptly captured the programme's vision:

"Only an Antyodaya approach can reach the most deprived. Only care and handholding can lift them."

As CRISP continues its engagement with the Inclusive Livelihoods Programme, we remain committed to strengthening the MEL architecture and supporting the generation of objective, actionable insights for the program teams. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with our partners to build a more inclusive and resilient rural economy.

► SKILL INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

NISHE Project

Virtual Conferences with BOATs

Multiple virtual conferences (VCs) were held between the 04 Boards of Apprenticeship Trainings (BOATs), 10 State Governments and 300+ Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on 08th and 09th May 2025 to discuss on the MoU signing process and onboarding apprentices on the NATS portal. The Commissioners of Collegiate Education representing the State Governments; the Directors of 04 BOATs; Shri. Radhey Shyam Julaniya, IAS (Retd.), National Lead-NISHE and CRISP NISHE team participated in the VCs.



The 04 Directors of BOATs – Chennai, Kolkata, Kanpur and Mumbai gave presentations on the origin of BOATs, apprentices engagement, apprenticeship opportunities and stipend. It was followed by the interaction between the BOATs and the Commissioners of Collegiate Education. A doubt clearing session was conducted

Visits to HEIs by CRISP NISHE team

The CRISP NISHE team across 10 states visited the HEIs for creating awareness on AEDPs, explain the benefits of AEDPs, distribute the AEDP Handbooks and monitor the IEC activities.



► RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Karnataka

CRISP Karnataka's Field Study on Commons



The CRISP Karnataka Team conducted a field visit to E. Thimmasandra Gram Panchayat in Sidlaghatta taluk of Chikballapur district, with the objective to study the status of common property resources in rural areas. The visit was conducted in collaboration with the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), who have been actively working on the aspect of Commons in Karnataka.

The Team had group discussions with GP officials and elected members, GPLF community cadre, and the members of the village-level committee called Grama Parisara Abhivrudhhi mattu Nirvahana Samiti (GPANS) formed for the purpose of maintenance of commons. Additionally, site visits were conducted to common lands such as grazing lands and sacred groves, and the participation of people in the protection of the commons was studied.

The team's interaction with the village-level committee was deeply moving and insightful. The strong connection the community shares with their land was evident in the way the committee members spoke about their experience and efforts. The highlight of the visit was the site visits through the common lands, where the committee members proudly showcased the progress they had made.

One particularly striking feature was the community management of Kalyani, which is a traditional body of water, designated here exclusively for drinking purposes. It was evident that the community as a whole understood and respected this, ensuring that the space was protected and not used for other purposes. This shared appreciation underscored the strong sense of cooperation within the village. The criticality of community participation and ownership to the protection of common lands was highlighted throughout the visit. Equally important was the support provided by the Panchayat officials and the structure of governance at the local level, which played a key role in facilitating the efforts of the community. Overall, the visit offered valuable insights into the importance of collective action in the management of common lands.

Tamil Nadu

CRSIP Hosts a Symposium to Improve Own Source Revenue of Gram Panchayats



On 16th May 2025, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Tamil Nadu, in collaboration with the Centre for Research in Schemes & Policies (CRISP), organised a symposium on “Ways to Improve Own Source Revenue (OSR) of Gram Panchayats” in Directorate of RD & PR, Chennai.

The symposium was chaired by Mr. S.M. Vijayanand, IAS (Retd.), Former Chief Secretary of Kerala and President of CRISP. The event was graced by eminent dignitaries, including Dr. C. Chandramouli, IAS (Retd.), Former Secretary to the Government of India; Dr. K. Shanmugham, IAS (Retd.), Former Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu, Mr. Gagandip Singh Bedi, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Tamil Nadu; and Mr. Ponniah, IAS, Commissioner of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj.

The CRISP Tamil Nadu team has presented their field findings and recommendations aimed at strengthening OSR mechanisms in the state. The symposium served as a platform for mutual learning, with experts from Karnataka, Kerala, and Telangana sharing successful models and best practices in local revenue generation. Representatives from academic institutions such as the Madras School of Economics, TISS, and Krea University, along with district, block, and Panchayat-level officials, also participated, contributing valuable insights into emerging trends, policy innovations, and capacity-building approaches. The symposium marked a significant step towards ensuring fiscally resilient Panchayats capable of delivering improved services, in alignment with the goals of local self-governance and sustainable development.

CRISP, TNSRLM, and Kudumbashree-NRO Join Hands to Strengthen VP-SHG Partnerships in Tamil Nadu

In a significant step toward strengthening grassroots governance and rural livelihoods, the CRISP Tamil Nadu team, Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission (TNSRLM), and Kudumbashree National Resource Organisation (NRO) came together to discuss strategic collaboration for the Village Panchayat-Self Help Group (VP-SHG) Partnership initiative in Tamil Nadu. The coordination meeting was jointly convened by the three institutions to explore synergies and define a roadmap for working collaboratively across all 37 districts of Tamil Nadu. The session was led by Mr. S.M. Vijayanand, President of CRISP and Former Chief Secretary of Kerala, and co-chaired by Mrs. Muthumeenal, Additional Director of Rural Development (ARD), Government of Tamil Nadu. The initiative aims to enhance convergence between governance structures and livelihood missions, enabling more inclusive planning and implementation, with the potential to serve as a replicable model for other states as well.





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