



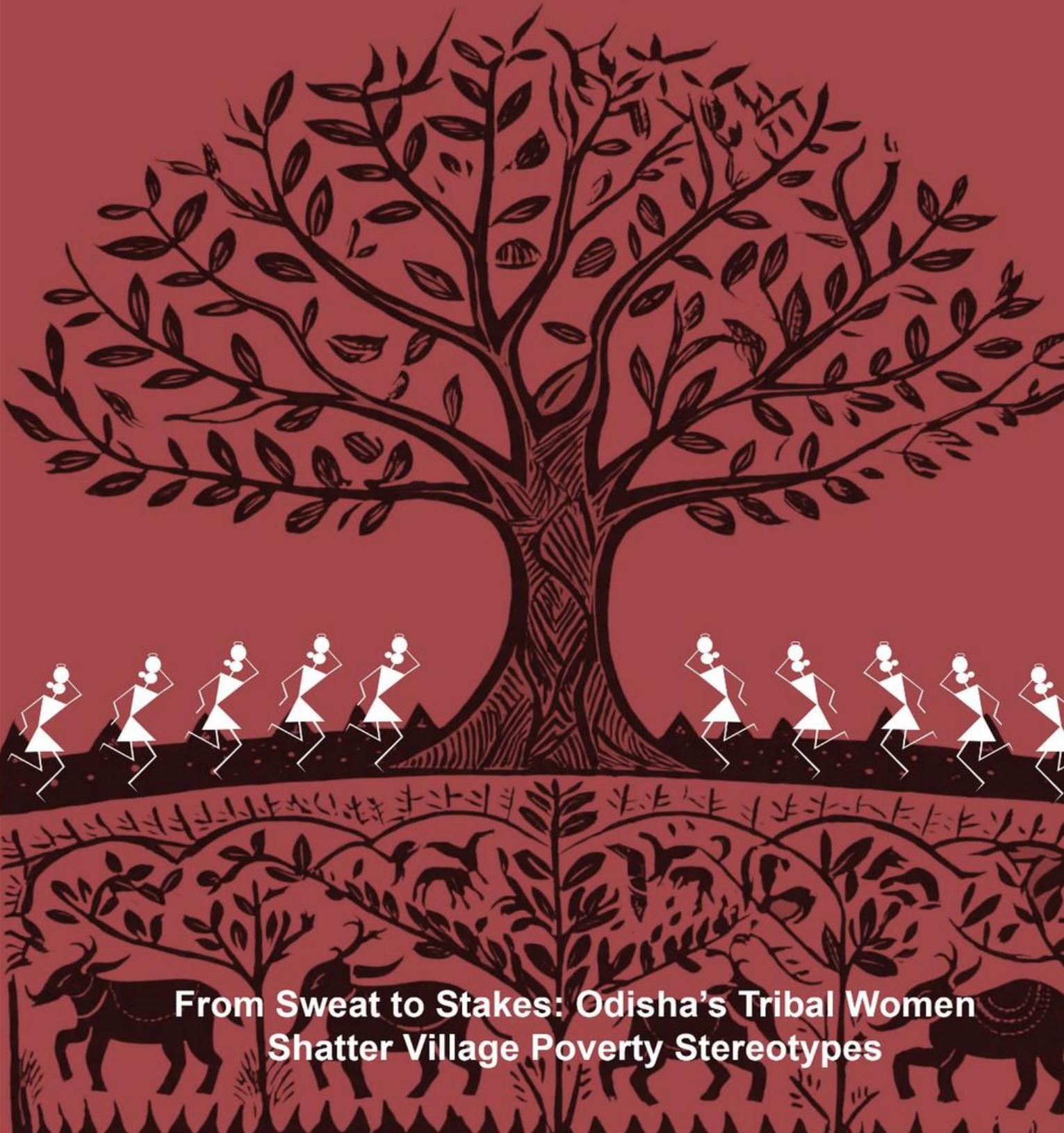
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राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण विकास एवं  
पंचायती राज संस्थान  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ  
Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India



एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

# PRAGATI NEWSLETTER



**From Sweat to Stakes: Odisha's Tribal Women  
Shatter Village Poverty Stereotypes**

ISSUE 368 / January 2026

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## From Sweat to Stakes: Odisha's Tribal Women Shatter Village Poverty Stereotypes

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**The author Ms Deepshikha Dey, interacting with villagers during her field engagement at Suakati village, Odisha. The visit was part of 28-day field visit under the PGDRDM programme of NIRDPR**

**I** did not arrive in Suakati village, Odisha, looking for a model. What I encountered instead everyday decisions, small, practical, and deeply human, that slowly accumulated into something larger than any single intervention.

Suakati does not announce itself through statistics. Almost every household belongs to a tribal community, and informal discussions with villagers and Panchayat members suggest that nearly ninety per cent of the population is a Scheduled Tribe, with a small presence of other social groups. Life here is shaped less by individual competition and more by collective norms, shared responsibilities, and long-standing social bonds. The village has also received recognition for e-governance, indicating that digitalisation is not



entirely new here. Technology has gradually blended into everyday administration, rather than transforming social relations overnight.

Suakati has a total population of 7,535, reflecting a predominantly tribal social structure. Of this population 4,954 individuals belong to Scheduled

Tribe communities, 697 to Scheduled Castes, and 1,884 to other social groups. The village exhibits a relatively balanced but slightly female-skewed gender composition, with 3,610 males and 3,925 females, translating into a sex ratio of approximately

1,087 females per 1,000 males. This demographic pattern is significant in understanding Suakati's social and economic dynamics, particularly the visible presence of women in agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, and collective institutions such as self-help groups and producer collectives.

necessary for schools, markets, and government offices. Settlements remain small and scattered, often located near forest edges, not only for access to livelihoods, but also to preserve cultural continuity.

What gives Suakati's social profile deeper meaning is its constitutional context. The village lies in a *Fifth Schedule area and is governed under the PESA Act*, which places community consent and collective resource management at the centre of governance. In such a setting, development cannot simply be delivered from outside. It must engage with existing social structures, values, and institutions. This is why recent changes in Suakati women-led producer groups, collective farming, shareholding enterprises, and forest-based livelihoods carry significance beyond income generation. These initiatives extend tribal traditions of cooperation while introducing new forms of economic agency.

*While institutions shape collective life in public spaces, power within households often follows a more fragile and unequal logic.*

Alcohol consumption remains prevalent in Suakati and continues to be a visible part of everyday life. Awareness campaigns and community discussions have increased, yet drinking has neither disappeared nor declined uniformly across households. What emerged during field interactions, however, was a subtle shift. While alcohol use persists, women increasingly speak about household stress, financial strain, and conflict within collective spaces such as self-help groups. These groups function not only as economic institutions but also as informal sites of emotional sharing, mutual support, and collective coping.

Rather than *accessing formal counselling or psychotherapeutic services*, women negotiate distress through *peer networks, shared*

livelihoods, and collective discussion. This challenges traditional psychotherapeutic models that locate distress within the individual and prioritise one-to-one clinical intervention. In Suakati, wellbeing is addressed socially and materially through income security, collective voice, and mutual accountability rather than through individual diagnosis or treatment.



This does not suggest resolution. Change remains uneven and gradual. Yet, increased economic contributions by women through agriculture, tasar sericulture, and SHG-linked livelihoods have begun to alter household power dynamics. Several women shared that regular earnings have strengthened their voice in decision-making, which in some cases has reduced extreme forms of abuse.

Gradually, these shifts are also reshaping *household relationships in more egalitarian directions*. As women's economic contributions have become more visible and reliable, decision-making has begun to move away from strictly hierarchical patterns towards greater negotiation and shared responsibility. Women described increased participation in decisions related to farming practices, expenditure, children's education, and engagement with institutions. While traditional gender norms have not disappeared, the combination of collective economic activity, peer support, and enhanced confidence has softened rigid power structures within families. Emerging *egalitarian relationships* in Suakati are thus grounded not in ideology, but in everyday practices of shared labour, shared risk, and shared ownership.



Two communities, in particular, give Suakati its distinct character: the Juang and the Pauri Bhuiya. Both are recognised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), yet their identity cannot be understood solely through administrative categories. Years of historical marginalisation have also produced what social theorists describe as internalised oppression, a condition in which communities, after prolonged exposure to exclusion, stigma, and neglect, begin to absorb these external judgments into their own self-perception.

This internalised oppression does not always manifest as resistance or protest. Instead, it surfaces quietly in lowered expectations from institutions, hesitation to assert rights, and a tendency to normalise hardship as inevitable. During field interactions, deprivation was often described not as injustice but as something “meant to be endured.” Such endurance is closely tied to long-standing societal gender role stereotypes, where women are expected to absorb distress, maintain household stability, and remain silent in the face of conflict. These norms shape not only labour roles but also emotional expression, often rendering

women’s suffering invisible or socially unacceptable.

Among the Juang, elders recall a time when forests formed the centre of life and shifting cultivation was common. While such practices have declined, ecological knowledge remains strong. People continue to read rainfall patterns, understand soil behaviour, and time their activities according to forest cycles. Decisions regarding farming, festivals, or disputes are rarely made individually. They are discussed, debated, and resolved collectively. Cultural expressions, such as dance, music, and ritual, remain significant, even as access to formal education and health services has historically been limited.

The Pauri Bhuiya, living closer to hill slopes and forest edges, maintain an equally deep relationship with forest-based livelihoods. Mahua flowers, neem seeds, kusum oilseeds, and jatropha are not occasional activities; they are integral to seasonal survival strategies. Agriculture remains largely rain-fed, irrigation is uncertain, and distance from markets and services shapes everyday realities. In such contexts, customary institutions and community networks often step in where formal systems do not consistently reach.

Across both communities, paddy remains the dominant crop. It is not chosen for its profitability, but for its reliability in a landscape marked by erratic rainfall and poor water retention. Tasar sericulture, forest produce collection, and occasional mining labour help households manage periods when agriculture alone cannot sustain them. Women are at the centre of all of this. They work in fields, collect forest produce, rear tasar silkworms, manage household finances, and actively participate in self-help groups. Many women described days that begin before sunrise and end long after dusk, revealing a double burden of productive and reproductive labour shaped by *entrenched gender expectations*.

Language mirrors this layered existence. Tribal dialects are spoken within hamlets, while Odia becomes



the concept of intersectionality helps explain why intimate partner violence (IPV) cannot be understood through gender alone. In contexts like Suakati, vulnerability is shaped by overlapping factors, including tribe, class, economic dependence, geography, education, and access to institutions. These factors reinforce one another, embedding violence within broader structures of marginalisation rather than isolating it as a personal or psychological problem.

Despite recent improvements in livelihoods, agriculture continues to face structural limitations. Farming remains largely mono-cropped, forest-based livelihoods are seasonal, and soil conditions limit water retention. Solar-powered lift irrigation has enabled diversification in select areas, but coverage remains uneven. Agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, and wage labour therefore coexist, each compensating for the limitations of the others.

The transition from survival farming to collective ownership becomes visible through numbers. In Danla village, 30 households pooled nearly 100 acres of land through women-led self-help groups, generating a turnover of approximately ₹40 lakh from collective pumpkin cultivation. Each household earned ₹1-1.5 lakh per season, not as wages, but as returns on ownership.

Across Banspal block, nearly 2,300 women are shareholders in a Farmer Producer Organisation, with thirty-eight producer groups operating across Suakati and nearby villages. Alongside agriculture, tasar sericulture provides a complementary livelihood that fits seamlessly into tribal life, allowing women to earn a living close to home while maintaining their connection to the forest.

The impact of ownership is visible in small but significant ways. Women speak more confidently with institutions, health emergencies no longer immediately push families into debt, and daughters' education is prioritised more consistently. These changes may not always appear in official indicators, but they define empowerment on the ground.

This is not a flawless story. Climate risks persist, markets fluctuate, and institutions require ongoing support and nurturing. Yet Suakati demonstrates that empowerment is not an event, but a process that unfolds through trust, collective agency, and ownership.

The transition from labourer to shareholder represents more than economic change; it represents dignity. It challenges the notion that rural women are merely a workforce to be managed, instead affirming them as economic actors capable of leadership and negotiation. In a tribal corner of Odisha, women are already showing what this looks like by owning their work, their relationships, and their future.

## Capacity Building Programme on Strengthening Panchayats' Role as Custodians of Commons



*DG along with faculty of the NIRDPR and FES during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding*

**W**ith a view to strengthening the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the sustainable management of natural resources, a Capacity Building Programme on “Strengthening Panchayats’ Role as Custodians of Commons” was organised from 19 to 21 January 2026 at the Hyderabad campus of the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR). The programme was conducted in collaboration with the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES).

The programme was organised under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between NIRDPR and FES in September 2025, which envisages long-term collaboration in the areas of commons governance, environmental conservation, climate resilience, and the strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The initiative reflects the shared commitment of both institutions towards promoting decentralised and community-led governance of common property resources.

The three-day programme focused on enhancing the capacities of Panchayats to effectively manage, protect, and restore common property resources such as village



*Participants of the programme with Dr Jyothis Satyapalan, Professor & Head, and Dr Aryashree Debapriya, Associate Professor, CPGS&DE*

commons, forests, grazing lands, and water bodies. Participants were oriented on constitutional and legal provisions related to commons, institutional and administrative frameworks, participatory planning approaches, social audit mechanisms, and the application of digital tools for mapping and managing common resources.

Expert-led sessions, case studies, and interactive discussions enabled participants to gain insights into successful models of commons governance and address practical challenges faced at the grassroots level. The programme emphasised the importance of community participation, transparency, and accountability in ensuring sustainable and equitable management of natural resources.

The capacity building programme contributed to strengthening decentralised governance and reinforced the critical role of Panchayats as custodians of commons, while reaffirming NIRDPR’s continued commitment to supporting Panchayati Raj Institutions in advancing sustainable and inclusive rural development.

## Exposure Visit on Best Practices of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS for Officials of Tripura



*Dr V. Suresh Babu and Dr Anuradha Palla of CWEL, and Dr Sucharita Pujari, with participants, during the Exposure Visit on Best Practices of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS*

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad organised an Exposure Visit on the Best Practices of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for officials from Tripura from 16 to 18 January 2026. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Wage Employment & Livelihoods (CWEL) with the objective of familiarising participants with effective implementation models and field-level innovations under MGNREGS. assets, improved natural resource management, and enhanced livelihood outcomes.

The exposure visit began with an orientation session at NIRDPR, where participants were briefed on the core objectives, operational guidelines, and recent reforms under MGNREGS. Faculty members highlighted Telangana's implementation approach, focusing on timely wage payments, quality asset creation, transparency mechanisms, and the use of digital tools for planning and monitoring.

As part of the programme, participants visited selected field locations to observe MGNREGS works, including water conservation structures, land development activities, plantation work, and community assets. Interactions with field officials, panchayat representatives, and workers provided valuable insights into planning processes, worksite management, community participation, and convergence with agriculture and natural resource management programmes.

The exposure also highlighted best practices related to geo-tagging, real-time monitoring, and accountability mechanisms that have strengthened programme delivery. Participants actively engaged in discussions, sharing implementation experiences and challenges from their respective districts, which enriched peer learning and cross-state exchange.

## Exposure Visit on Best Practices of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in Telangana



*Participants of the Exposure Visit on Best Practices of MGNREGS in Telangana with Dr V. Suresh Babu, Dr Anuradha Palla, Dr Digambar A. Chimankar, Associate Professor, and Dr Sonal Mobar Roy, Assistant Professor, Centre for Wage Employment & Livelihoods (CWEL)*

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) through its Centre for Wage Employment & Livelihoods (CWEL), organised an Exposure Visit to the Best Practices of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in Telangana from 19 to 21 January 2026. The programme was conducted as part of NIRDPR's ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacities of officials and stakeholders associated with the implementation of wage employment programmes.

The exposure visit aimed to provide participants with practical insights into the effective planning, execution, and monitoring of MGNREGS works. Participants were exposed to successful field-level interventions, innovative implementation strategies, and sustainable asset creation practices adopted in selected districts of Telangana.

During the visit, participants interacted with district- and field-level functionaries and gained firsthand knowledge of worksite management, community mobilisation, convergence with other rural development programmes, and the use of transparency and accountability mechanisms. The visit also highlighted the role of MGNREGS in enhancing rural livelihoods, strengthening natural resource management, and promoting inclusive development.

The programme facilitated peer learning and experience sharing among participants, enabling them to identify best practices and explore possibilities for replication in their respective states. The exposure visit significantly contributed to enhancing the understanding of effective MGNREGS implementation and reaffirmed NIRDPR's commitment to promoting sustainable and inclusive rural development through capacity building and knowledge dissemination.

## Exposure Visit-cum-Training Programme for Local Government Elected Members of Sri Lanka



**Participants of the Exposure Visit-cum-Training Programme with Dr Vanishree Joseph, Assist. Prof & Head i/c, CGSD and Director, NRLM; Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Assist. Prof & Head, CPR-DP&SSD; and Dr Pranab Kumar Ghosh, Asst. Reg. (Training) i/c, NIRDPR, Hyderabad.**

**A**n Exposure Visit-cum-Training Programme for Local Government Elected Members of the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC), Sri Lanka, was organised from 19 to 29 January 2026 at the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning and Social Service Delivery, NIRDPR, under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

The programme was designed to familiarise the participants with India's experience in decentralised governance, Panchayati Raj systems, and participatory planning processes. It aimed to strengthen the understanding of elected representatives on local governance structures, institutional frameworks, and the delivery of social services at the grassroots level.

During the programme, participants were exposed to key aspects of Panchayati Raj functioning, including democratic decentralisation, Gram

Panchayat Development Planning (GPDP), convergence of development schemes, financial management, transparency and accountability mechanisms, and citizen engagement. Field visits and exposure sessions provided participants with practical insights into the implementation of rural development programmes and innovative governance practices in India.

The training also facilitated interaction with NIRDPR faculty and practitioners, enabling experience sharing and cross-learning between Indian and Sri Lankan local governance systems. The programme highlighted the relevance of community participation, inclusive planning, and responsive service delivery in strengthening local self-governments.

The exposure visit-cum-training programme contributed to capacity building of elected representatives from Sri Lanka and reinforced NIRDPR's role in promoting international cooperation and knowledge exchange in the field of decentralised governance and rural development.

## Training cum Exposure Visit for Elected Representatives from Goa



*Participants with NIRDPR faculty and GIPARD representatives during the Training cum Exposure Visit*

### **A** Transformative Exposure Visit for Panchayat Leaders

The Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning and Social Service Delivery (CPRDP&SSD), hosted a meaningful training cum exposure visit for 43 elected representatives from Gram Panchayats across Goa during 15-19 January 2026 at NIRDPR, Hyderabad. Sponsored by the Goa Institute of Public Administration and Rural Development (GIPARD), Government of Goa, this four-day training programme brought together sarpanchs, deputy sarpanchs, and ward members from both Goa North and Goa South districts to immerse themselves in innovative governance practices and sustainable development strategies.

### **A** Comprehensive Learning Experience

The programme was carefully designed to combine classroom learning with field exposure. Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor and Head of CPRDP&SSD, opened the programme with an insightful welcome address on the three-tier Panchayati Raj system. Dr Pratyusna Patnaik, the programme director, outlined the objectives and set clear expectations for the participants' learning journey.



*Participants during a training session at NIRDPR, Hyderabad*

Expert sessions covered critical themes in Panchayat governance. Dr R. Chinnadurai, Associate Professor, presented innovative strategies to enhance Own Source Revenue (OSR) of Gram Panchayats, with case studies of high-performing panchayats. Mr P. J. Wesley, Deputy Commissioner of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in Telangana, shared best practices in drinking water, sanitation, plantation, and service delivery, focusing on the areas directly relevant to Goa's development agenda. Dr R. Ramesh led discussions on solid waste management in Gram Panchayats, equipping representatives with practical, implementable solutions.

An important highlight was the session on Women's Empowerment and Child-friendly Gram Panchayats, conducted through an engaging 'power walk' activity. This interactive approach helped participants reflect on the critical role of elected representatives in advancing gender equality and protecting child welfare at the grassroots level.



**Interactive "Power Walk" activity on women empowerment and child-friendly governance**

### **Learning from the Ground: Field Exposure**

The programme's most impactful element was the field exposure to award-winning Gram Panchayats. Participants visited Narkhuda Gram Panchayat in Shamshabad Mandal, Ranga Reddy district, recognised for its excellence in clean and green initiatives and OSR generation. They also visited Chimaldari Gram Panchayat in Vikarabad District—a national award winner under the Good Governance theme of the Localised Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs).

During these visits, the participants observed illustrations of community participation, decentralised planning, and local development initiatives that they could adapt to their own panchayats. This exposure bridged the gap between theory and practice, providing tangible models of successful governance.

### **From Learning to Action: Participant Presentations**

On the final day, participants demonstrated their engagement and understanding through group presentations. Each group presented their learnings from the field visits, organised around themes of the



**Participants at Narkhuda GP during the field exposure visit**

Localised Sustainable Development Goals and Own Source Revenue generation. The presentations reflected participants' commitment to translating knowledge into action in their panchayats. Expert feedback was provided by the panellists, who highlighted best practices and offered constructive guidance for implementation among GPs in Goa. The combination of expert inputs, interactive sessions, and field exposure created a holistic learning experience.

### **Building Capacity for Strengthening Panchayati Raj**

The exposure visit exemplifies NIRDPR's commitment to strengthening democratic decentralisation through building the capacity of elected representatives. By equipping elected representatives with knowledge of innovative governance practices, sustainable resource management, and inclusive development, the programme contributes to building more responsive and effective Gram Panchayats. The programme was coordinated by Dr Pratyusna Patnaik, Assistant Professor, CPRDP&SSD and Ms K. Vidyullatha, Consultant, SoEPR. This programme reaffirms the vital role of continuous learning and inter-state knowledge exchange in strengthening grassroots governance structures in India.

## Karnataka (Mysuru) visit of Gujarat MG NREGA officials



*Officials from Gujarat pose for a group photograph during the Exposure Visit organised by NIRDPR, Hyderabad and ANS-SIRD, Mysuru, at Mahatma Gandhi NREGS work sites in Mysuru District.*

**N**ational Institute of Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad, along with ANS-SIRD (Mysuru) organised a three-day exposure visit on the Best Practices of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS for officials from Gujarat from 8th to 10th December 2025. The programme aimed at providing participants with a close look at effective implementation models and successful field practices under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The exposure visit began with an overview of the programme's objectives and key achievements, followed by thematic sessions on planning processes, sustainable asset creation, use of digital tools, and measures to ensure transparency and timely wage payments. Participants were taken to selected field locations where noteworthy works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS have been carried out in different Gram Panchayats. The

officials visited Bilikere and Bannikuppe Gram Panchayats in Hubsur Taluka Mandal, Mysuru District and Bayalukuppe Gram Panchayat in Periyapattana Mandal, Mysuru District. These visits helped them observe initiatives related to water conservation, land development, and rural infrastructure. Interactions with community members and field functionaries gave the officials an opportunity to understand local challenges, innovative approaches, and the impact of sustained community engagement. The field exposure also showcased models where Mahatma Gandhi NREGS activities have contributed to enhancing livelihoods through convergence with agriculture, horticulture, and natural resource management programmes.

Participants noted that the demonstration of practical examples, combined with discussions on policy aspects, helped them gain a clearer understanding of how high-quality Mahatma Gandhi NREGS implementation can support rural development in a holistic manner.

## NIRDPR Conducts Leadership Development Programme for Officials from the Republic of Maldives



**Participants of the Leadership Development Programme with Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor & Head, CPR-DP&SSD; Dr Pranab Kumar Ghosh, Asst. Reg. (Training) i/c; and Shri Manoj Kumar, Registrar & Director (Admn), NIRDPR, Hyderabad.**

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad organised a Leadership Development Programme for officials of Island Councils and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) from the Republic of Maldives from 4 to 19 January 2026. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning and Social Service Delivery as part of NIRDPR's international capacity-building initiatives.

The programme was designed to enhance leadership skills, governance capacities, and institutional understanding of Maldivian officials working at the local level. It aimed to expose participants to India's experience in decentralisation, participatory planning, service delivery systems, and community-based development, with a focus on practices that could be adapted to the island governance context of the Maldives.

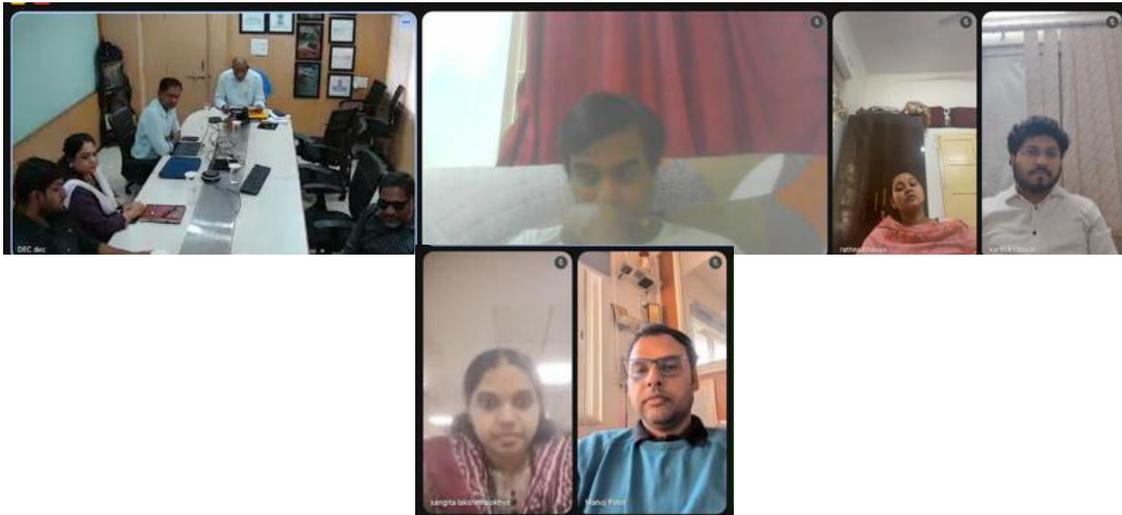
During the two-week programme, participants attended a series of classroom sessions, interactive discussions, and group exercises facilitated by faculty members of NIRDPR. The sessions covered key themes such as the evolution and functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India, decentralised planning, local governance reforms,

leadership and communication skills, financial management, social accountability, and inclusive service delivery. Special emphasis was placed on citizen engagement, transparency, and responsiveness in local governance.

The programme also included exposure visits and practical sessions that provided participants with first-hand insights into local governance practices and institutional arrangements in India. These interactions enabled participants to observe how decentralised systems function at different levels and how community participation contributes to effective planning and service delivery.

Throughout the programme, participants actively shared their experiences and challenges related to island council administration in the Maldives. The exchange of perspectives fostered mutual learning and helped build a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences in local governance systems across countries. Many participants expressed that the programme helped broaden their perspective on leadership roles and strengthened their ability to address governance challenges in their respective jurisdictions.

## Online Prize Distribution Ceremony of the 6th NIRDPR Film Festival



*Online Prize Distribution Ceremony of the 6th NIRDPR Film Festival, graced by Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR*

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), organised the Online Prize Distribution Ceremony of the 6th NIRDPR Film Festival on 19 January 2026 at 3.00 PM. The ceremony was held in virtual mode to honour and felicitate the winners whose films creatively captured themes related to rural development, social transformation, and livelihoods.

The programme was graced by Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, as the Chief Guest, formally distributed the prizes and addressed the participants. In his address, Dr Narendra Kumar highlighted the importance of films as powerful tools for communication, awareness generation, and documentation of grassroots realities. He appreciated the efforts of filmmakers in portraying complex rural issues with sensitivity and realism, and emphasised the role of such films in influencing policy discourse and development practice.

The 6th NIRDPR Film Festival received entries under different thematic categories, reflecting diverse dimensions of rural life and development. Based on the recommendations of the jury, prizes were awarded in the following categories.

- **Economic Systems:**

Rural Indian Economic Journey, directed by Sangeeta Alekhya, was awarded the First Prize, while Sowing Hope, directed by Ch. Karthik Krishna, received the Second Prize.

- **Society:**

Pariwartan, directed by Manoj Patel, won First Prize, and Frame of Change, directed by P. Ratna Bhavya, won Second Prize.

- **Family Life:**

Rural Families - 75 Years of Indian Cinema, directed by Sunil Bandi, received the First Prize. The jury did not find a suitable entry for the second prize in this category.

During the ceremony, filmmakers were congratulated for their creative contributions and commitment to showcasing rural narratives through cinema. The jury members' observations on the quality, relevance, and social significance of the films were also shared, highlighting the growing interest in development communication through visual media.

The event ended with a vote of thanks, and congratulations were extended to all the award winners.

## NIRDPR–ISDM Sign Memorandum of Understanding to Strengthens Development Management Capacities



*MoU signing ceremony between NIRDPR and the Indian School of Development Management (ISDM)*

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), and the Indian School of Development Management (ISDM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 23 January 2026 at Hyderabad, marking the beginning of a long-term institutional collaboration aimed at strengthening development management capabilities within government systems, particularly in the areas of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

The MoU was signed on behalf of NIRDPR by Dr. Jyothis Sathyapalan, Professor & Head (CPGS&DE), and on behalf of ISDM by Mr. Ravi Sreedharan, Co-Founder and President. The agreement will remain valid for a period of five years, up to January 2031, and provides a flexible framework for collaboration based on mutual priorities and emerging needs.

Under the MoU, both institutions will collaborate in several broad areas, including capacity building and training, curriculum and content development, collaborative research and action research, faculty and resource person exchange, and digital and vernacular learning initiatives. The partnership envisages joint design and delivery of training modules and learning journeys that integrate Development Management perspectives such as systems thinking, adaptive programme management,

participatory approaches, data-informed decision-making, and outcome orientation into existing and future NIRDPR programmes.

The partnership also envisages co-creation of teaching materials, case studies, toolkits, and frameworks relevant to rural development and Panchayati Raj, grounded in field realities. Collaborative research and pilot initiatives will seek to improve development outcomes and generate practice-based learning, while faculty exchange and joint seminars will promote mutual learning and dialogue on emerging issues in governance and development management.

A structured governance and coordination mechanism has been proposed under the MoU, including the designation of nodal officers from both institutions and the formation of a Core Committee to prepare annual work plans, oversee implementation, and periodically review progress. Financial commitments, where applicable, will be decided separately for each mutually agreed activity.

The partnership is expected to contribute significantly to enhancing the effectiveness, adaptability, and impact of development programmes in rural India, in alignment with national priorities for inclusive and sustainable development.

## NIRDPR Celebrates 77th Republic Day



**Dr. G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, hoisting the National Flag during the 77th Republic Day celebrations**

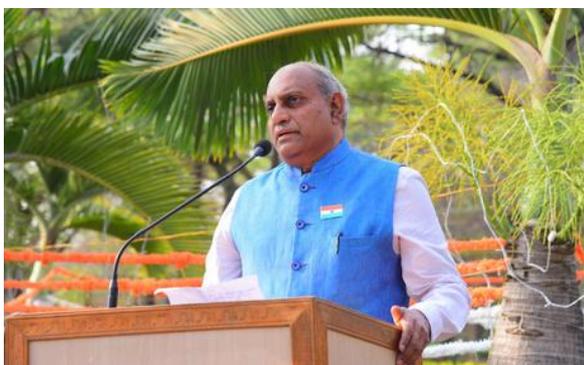
The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) celebrated the 77th Republic Day of India at its Hyderabad campus with the hoisting of the National Flag by Dr. G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR. Faculty members, officers, students, and staff of the Institute participated in the celebrations.

milestones during his tenure, including navigating the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, restoring classroom-based training, improving the quality and relevance of training programmes and research, strengthening Panchayati Raj through the establishment of the School of Excellence, contributing to national initiatives such as the Aspirational Blocks Programme, integrating emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, and achieving operational self-sustainability through diversified funding sources.



On the occasion, Dr. G. Narendra Kumar was felicitated by the faculty and staff of NIRDPR in recognition of his leadership and contributions to the Institute.

▶ The Republic Day programme can be viewed on YouTube:



Addressing the gathering, Dr. Narendra Kumar reflected on his five-year association with NIRDPR, coinciding with his last working day at the Institute. He highlighted key

## Training Programme on Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chain Development in Watershed Areas



*Dr Nithya V. G., Assistant Professor, and Dr Surjit Vikraman, Associate Professor & Head, Centre for Agrarian Studies, with participants, during the five-day Training Programme on Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chain Development in Watershed Areas*

**A** five-day Training Programme on “Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chain Development in Watershed Areas” was organised from 19 to 23 January 2026 at the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Agrarian Studies, NIRDPR, in collaboration with the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

The training programme aimed to enhance participants’ understanding of value chain development approaches that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and socially inclusive, particularly in watershed areas. The programme brought together officials, practitioners, and professionals working in the fields of watershed development, rural livelihoods, agriculture, and natural resource management.

The sessions focused on key aspects such as linking watershed

development with livelihoods, integrating agriculture and allied activities, strengthening producer collectives, improving market access, and promoting value addition at the local level. Participants were also oriented on inclusive business models, climate-resilient practices, and strategies to enhance farmers’ income while ensuring sustainable use of natural resources.

Expert-led lectures, case studies, group discussions, and experience sharing formed the core of the training methodology. The programme provided participants with practical insights into successful value chain initiatives implemented in watershed contexts and highlighted opportunities for convergence with ongoing rural development programmes.

The training programme contributed to capacity building of stakeholders involved in watershed-based development and reinforced NIRDPR’s commitment to promoting sustainable, inclusive, and market-oriented livelihood interventions in rural areas.

## Training of Trainers (ToTs) Programme on Marketing Skills (Non-Farm) for Western Region



**Participants of the ToTs Programme on Marketing Skills (Non-Farm) for the Western Region with Dr Partha Pratim Sahu, Associate Professor & Head i/c, CEDFI & CCGPA, and Dr Akanksha Shukla, Associate Professor, CPGS&DE**

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Delhi Branch, successfully organised a Training of Trainers (ToTs) Programme on Marketing Skills (Non-Farm) for the Western Region from 19 to 21 January 2026 at the NIRDPR Campus, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Marketing & Promotion of Rural Products and Entrepreneurship Development (CMPRPED) under the guidance of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

The three-day ToT programme was designed to strengthen the capacities of trainers, development professionals, and practitioners engaged in promoting non-farm livelihoods and rural entrepreneurship. The overarching objective of the programme was to equip participants with advanced marketing knowledge, practical tools, and training methodologies that could be further disseminated at the grassroots level to support rural producers, artisans, and micro-entrepreneurs.

The training covered a wide range of topics related to marketing skills for non-farm enterprises, including market analysis, understanding consumer behaviour, product positioning, branding and packaging, pricing strategies, value chain

development, and market linkages. Special emphasis was placed on practical approaches to marketing rural products, improving competitiveness, and enhancing income opportunities for non-farm entrepreneurs. Sessions also addressed emerging market opportunities, digital marketing basics, and strategies for accessing institutional and organised markets.

In addition to technical inputs, the programme focused on strengthening the training and facilitation skills of participants. Interactive sessions, group exercises, case studies, and experience-sharing discussions enabled participants to enhance their pedagogical skills and learn effective methods for training field-level functionaries and entrepreneurs. The participatory nature of the programme encouraged peer learning and exchange of best practices across States of the Western Region.

Resource persons and faculty members from NIRDPR provided expert insights, drawing upon field experiences and successful models of rural marketing and entrepreneurship promotion. Participants actively engaged in discussions on challenges faced in marketing non-farm products and explored context-specific solutions that could be adapted in their respective regions.

## Training Programme for National-Level Master Trainers of Empanelled Agencies



*Participants of the four-day Training Programme for National-Level Master Trainers of Empanelled Agencies with Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor & Head, CPR-DP&SSD,*

**A** four-day Training Programme for National-Level Master Trainers of Empanelled Agencies (Batch I & II) were organised from 27 to 30 January 2026 at the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning & Social Service Delivery, NIRDPR, under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

The training programme aimed at strengthening the capacities of master trainers from empanelled agencies to effectively support capacity building initiatives for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across the country. The programme focused on enhancing participants' understanding of decentralised governance, participatory planning, and effective delivery of social services at the grassroots level.

During the programme, participants were oriented on key aspects of Panchayati Raj functioning, including

Gram Panchayat Development Planning (GPDP), convergence of schemes, social inclusion, transparency and accountability mechanisms, and citizen-centric service delivery. Emphasis was also laid on adult learning methodologies, training design, facilitation skills, and effective communication to enable participants to function as resource persons at the national and state levels.

The training featured expert-led sessions, interactive discussions, group exercises, and experience sharing, providing participants with practical insights and tools to enhance the quality and impact of training programmes conducted by empanelled agencies. The programme also facilitated peer learning and networking among master trainers from different regions.

The training programme contributed to building a strong pool of national-level master trainers and reaffirmed NIRDPR's commitment to strengthening capacity-building systems and promoting effective, inclusive, and responsive Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country.

## Training Programme on Herbal Products Making under Lakhpati Didi Initiative



*Participants of the Training Programme on Herbal Products Making with Dr S. Ramesh Sakthivel, Associate Professor & Head, Centre for CSR & PPP, and Mr Mohammad Khan, Senior Consultant, RTP*

**A** five-day Training Programme on Herbal Products Making using Herbal and Aromatic Herbs was organised from 28 January to 01 February 2026 at the Rural Technology Park, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Innovations and Appropriate Technologies for Skills and Jobs, NIRDPR, under the Lakhpati Didi Initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

The training programme aimed at enhancing the skills of women participants, particularly members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), in the preparation of value-added herbal products to promote livelihood opportunities and income generation. The programme focused on the use of locally available herbal and aromatic plants for developing marketable products.

During the training, participants were provided hands-on exposure to various stages of herbal product

preparation, including identification and selection of medicinal and aromatic plants, processing techniques, formulation of herbal products, quality control, packaging, and basic marketing strategies. Emphasis was laid on low-cost, eco-friendly technologies and hygienic production practices suitable for small-scale enterprises.

Interactive sessions and practical demonstrations enabled participants to gain confidence in adopting herbal product-based enterprises at the village level. The programme also highlighted the scope for linking herbal product manufacturing with existing livelihood missions and market platforms to ensure sustainability.

The training programme contributed to strengthening the entrepreneurial skills of women and supported the objectives of the Lakhpati Didi Initiative by promoting self-employment, value addition, and sustainable livelihoods, while reaffirming NIRDPR's commitment to skill development and rural entrepreneurship.

## Training Programme on Jute and Cloth Products Making under Lakhpati Didi Initiative



*Women trainees of the Jute and Cloth Products Making programme with Dr S. Ramesh Sakthivel, Associate Professor & Head, Centre for CSR & PPP, and Mr Mohammad Khan, Senior Consultant, Rural Technology Park (RTP)*

**W**ith the objective of promoting sustainable livelihoods and women's entrepreneurship, a five-day Training Programme on Jute and Cloth Products Making was organised from 28 January to 01 February 2026 at the Rural Technology Park, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad, under the Lakhpati Didi Initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The programme was conducted by the Centre for Innovations and Appropriate Technologies for Skills and Jobs, NIRDPR.

The programme focused on strengthening the skills and entrepreneurial capabilities of women participants, particularly members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), by enabling them to develop value-added jute and cloth-based products. Emphasis was placed on eco-friendly production practices and the effective use of locally available materials to create income-generating opportunities.

Participants received hands-on training in product designing, material selection, cutting, stitching, and finishing of various jute and cloth items such as bags, utility products, and decorative articles. The sessions also covered quality control measures, costing, packaging, branding, and basic marketing strategies to familiarise participants with end-to-end enterprise management.

Interactive demonstrations and practical exercises encouraged active participation and experience sharing among the trainees, helping them build confidence to initiate or expand small-scale enterprises. The programme also highlighted opportunities for market linkages and convergence with existing livelihood programmes to ensure long-term sustainability.

The training programme contributed to women's economic empowerment in alignment with the objectives of the Lakhpati Didi Initiative.

## Training Programme for National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs) of Empanelled Agencies



*Participants of the four-day Training Programme for National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs) of Empanelled Agencies with Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor & Head, CPRDP & SSD*

The School of Excellence in Panchayati Raj (SoEPR), National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad, conducted a four-day Training Programme for National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs) of Empanelled Agencies from 27–30 January 2026. The programme aimed to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and facilitation capacities of master trainers engaged in capacity-building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). A total of 49 participants from various empanelled agencies across the country attended the programme and were actively involved in the learning process.

The training covered key thematic areas, including institutional processes of Gram Sabha and Panchayat functioning, financial management and service delivery, Own Source Revenue (OSR), GPDP and SDG localisation, property tax systems, digital governance tools, and leadership and communication skills. The programme adopted a participatory and experiential learning methodology comprising

expert sessions, group discussions, case studies, simulations, and experience sharing, enabling participants to link theoretical concepts with practical field-level challenges.

Activities included group discussions, case studies, role plays and problem-solving exercises, enabling participants to link theoretical concepts with field-level realities. Sessions on group dynamics, communication, leadership and gender sensitivity further enhanced the facilitation and behavioural competencies of the master trainers.

Participants appreciated the relevance, practical orientation, and interactive nature of the sessions. During the valedictory session, certificates were distributed, and participants shared key learnings and suggestions.

The Programme Director was Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor and Head, CPRDP&SSD.

Dr Sumit Meshram, Consultant, SoEPR, and Mr Upender, Senior Consultant, SoEPR, coordinated the training programme.

## Effective Use of Social Media and Documentation of Watershed Programme



*Dr Sucharita Pujari, with participants, during the training program on Effective use of social media and Documentation of Watershed programme*

The off campus training program was organised by NIRDPR on 5th-9th Jan. 2026. A total of 37 participants from the watershed department of 27 districts and few participants from the SIRD and ETCs attended the training. A total of twelve sessions were conducted on the first three days of the program which covered the basic from understanding the current challenges and opportunities in watershed to knowing the points where social media can be utilised for mobilisation of the public. Then, basics of communication, elements of communication and what needs to be said and how, was taught with the help of class room activity. Later the social media platform and what makes it a strong tool of communication was understood. There were separate sessions to understand and identify best practises and identify types of case studies. The participants were made to watch small 40-50 seconds YouTube clips uploaded on Ministry website under Media sub-head to understand how the Ministry is using media under its social media handles and what is expected of them as an outcome of this training program.

Later they were divided in small groups and videography, camera angles, light use and finally editing was taught over smart phone. Then they were asked to

record their own video of 30 seconds on the Thakur Pyare Lal State Institute Panchayat and Rural development, as a part of class room activity. The analysis of each video was done, and the SWOT were explained. On the fourth day, a field visit was conducted where they were taken to the village Gadadih, Magarlod Block, Dhamtari District. Each group was asked to document the specific sites of watershed works and to suggest the future course of activities through convergence, which was the main theme of this activity. Each group developed at least two short YouTube videos as a consequence of this visit. On the fifth day, based on the analysis of the short videos produced by them, brainstorming was done to assimilate experiential learnings from the group and the Dhamtari team was suggested various future activities in convergence with Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. How Messaging will differ as per the target audience - the community, government officials of the line department and Panchayat representatives was discussed. All throughout the program, the local coordinator and facilitator, Dr Ajay Gurudiwan was present and contributed to the program. The valedictory session saw the presence of Deputy Director Smt. Seema Mishra, along with the other faculty members of the SIRDPR.

The training program ended with a post-test conducted online through the TMP portal and the recording of feedback for each session.

## DAY-NRLM in a Global Lens: India's Unmatched Model of Women's Collective Power



Photo Credit: ChatGPT

When the world talks about large-scale poverty reduction, it often references Bangladesh's BRAC, Latin America's conditional cash transfers, or Africa's Productive Safety Net Programmes. Yet, quietly and consistently, India has built something far more ambitious—DAY-NRLM, the world's largest women-led development movement, unmatched in size, structure, and social impact.

Today, DAY-NRLM has mobilised over 10 crore rural women into 90 lakh Self-Help Groups. No other country has brought women together at this scale. NRLM's institutional architecture—SHGs, Village Organisations, Cluster-Level Federations, and Block-Level Federations—is the only government-backed, nationwide, three-tier collective structure of its kind in the world. It spans more than 6 lakh villages and 7,000+ blocks, covering rural India with a density that most global programmes have never attempted.

One of NRLM's most distinctive strengths is the creation of a massive women-led para-professional workforce. India now has 5–6 lakh Bank Sakhis, Pashu Sakhis, Krishi Sakhis, Poshan Sakhis, Community Auditors and CRPs—who deliver last-

mile services in banking, agriculture, livestock, nutrition, and governance. No other country has an equivalent community-based, women-led cadre system at this scale. Ethiopia's Health Extension Worker model, for example, has fewer than 40,000 workers—primarily government employees, not community institutions.

Financially too, India stands apart. SHGs under NRLM have accessed more than ₹11 lakh crore in formal bank credit, making this the largest microfinance linkage programme on the planet. Repayment rates are consistently above 97%, far outperforming microfinance portfolios in Latin America (ranges between 5–10%) and Africa (8–12%). The world recognises India's SHG credit ecosystem as one of the most reliable borrower networks ever built.

Where NRLM truly shines is in promoting diverse, modern, and future-oriented livelihoods. Across India, SHG women run enterprises that go far beyond traditional activities:

- drone spraying services
- solar-powered micro-enterprises
- EV-based rural transport
- millet cafés and nutrition collectives
- digital bookkeeping
- e-commerce storefronts
- FPOs and producer collectives
- community-based tourism



*Photo Credit: ChatGPT*

Globally, rural entrepreneurship programmes in the U.S., U.K., and the EU support only a fraction of this scale. India today has more women-led rural microenterprises than many industrialised countries combined.

But NRLM's most transformative impact lies in social empowerment. Millions of SHG women now participate in Gram Sabhas, track entitlements, negotiate with frontline officials, support vulnerable households, and take leadership roles in Panchayats. Countries such as Kenya, Brazil, and South Africa have vibrant women's movements—but none have achieved this level of institutionalised civic participation at the grassroots.

Very few global programmes combine livelihoods, credit access, social mobilisation, governance participation, digital inclusion,

nutrition, and gender transformation under one umbrella.

Even celebrated conditional cash transfer models like Mexico's Oportunidades or Brazil's Bolsa Familia operate through government systems, not women's collectives.

What makes DAY-NRLM truly unique is its saturation strategy—the ambition to mobilise every poor rural household, leaving no village, no hamlet, and no woman behind. This scale, ambition, and depth of community ownership have no parallel anywhere in the world.

In the global development programmes, DAY-NRLM stands not just as a mission but as India's pioneering contribution to collective action, women's economic power, and participatory governance. It is a model studied internationally—and increasingly, a framework other countries aspire to learn from.



## DG, NIRDPR Addresses VARTALAP Media Workshop on VB-GRAM G Act



*Dr G. Narendra Kumar, DG, NIRDPR, and Faculties NIRDPR during the VARTALAP Media Workshop on the VB-G RAM G Act organised by PIB at ICAR-NAARM,*

The newly enacted Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-G RAM G) presents a reimagined framework for rural employment and development, aligning statutory wage employment with India's long-term vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. At a one-day VARTALAP Media Workshop organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) at the ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), NIRDPR leadership articulated key policy features and reaffirmed the Act's commitment to rural livelihoods.

Dr G. Narendra Kumar, Director General, NIRDPR, who was the chief guest at the workshop, addressed growing public discourse around the new legislation, particularly concerns related to rural wages and job security. Dr G. Narendra Kumar clarified that, contrary to misinformation circulating in media and social channels, the minimum wages of rural workers will be fully safeguarded under the VB-G RAM G Act. He emphasised that the legislation is not a dilution of the earlier employment guarantee regime, but rather provides a strengthened pathway to generate employment, build rural infrastructure, and improve the quality of life in villages.

Dr G. Narendra Kumar highlighted that the Act promotes decentralised planning and monitoring by formally engaging all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and introduces rule-based normative allocations to states to improve predictability and accountability in fund flows. He underlined the importance of the media in spreading accurate information and addressing misconceptions about the law's objectives.

Adding a policy perspective, Dr. Jyothis Sathyapalan, Professor at NIRDPR, described the VB-G RAM G Act as a course correction rather than a reversal of past gains under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). She noted that the reforms aim to enhance outcomes by building on the strengths of the earlier legislation while focusing on improved implementation and rural development outcomes.

The workshop brought together journalists from print and electronic media, senior officials from NAARM, and representatives from PIB and associated institutions. The interaction emphasised the need for informed public discourse as the VB-G RAM G Act begins implementation across Gram Panchayats nationwide.

## NIRDPR-NERC Director Delivers Keynote Address at PIB Media Workshop on VB-G RAM G



**Dr R. Murugesan, Director, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Guwahati delivering Key Note Address**

Press Information Bureau (PIB), Shillong organised a Varta – Media Workshop on the theme “Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)” (VB-G RAM G) on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2026 at the Shillong Press Club, with the objective of engaging the media on key rural development, employment and livelihood-related initiatives of the Government of India.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr R. Murugesan, Director, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Guwahati. Dr Murugesan made a detailed presentation tracing the historical evolution of rural development initiatives, the paradigm shift in policy approaches, and the programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development, from a focus on basic needs and equity considerations to economic growth and trickle-down mechanisms.



Dr Murugesan outlined the progression of India’s wage employment programmes, beginning with early initiatives such as the Rural Manpower Programme and the Crash Scheme for Rural Employment, followed by structured interventions including the National Rural Employment Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, and Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, highlighting how these programmes gradually evolved in response to changing socio-economic conditions.

Highlighting the limitations of incremental reforms under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, Dr Murugesan explained that the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, represents a decisive policy shift. He stated that the new Act addresses structural weaknesses while strengthening employment generation, transparency, planning and accountability. The transition from a central sector scheme to a centrally sponsored framework recognises the local nature of rural employment and asset creation, with Gram Panchayat-led planning, shared responsibility between the Centre and States, and a normative allocation framework to improve efficiency and prevent misuse.

He explained that the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, addresses these gaps by expanding guaranteed employment to 125 days, thereby enhancing household incomes, stimulating village-level consumption and reducing distress-driven migration.

Dr Murugesan also discussed the persistent challenges of inequality, poverty, unemployment and social stratification in rural India, and outlined the evolution of the flagship programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development, including the key features and scope of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. He then elaborated on how the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) builds upon these initiatives, addressing existing gaps through an expanded employment guarantee, stronger institutional mechanisms and enhanced transparency, aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Addressing the gathering, Smt. Pavni Gupta, Joint Director, PIB Guwahati, stated that the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) has been recently

introduced, and that government schemes and legislations are periodically reviewed and updated to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness. She noted that platforms such as this workshop provide an important forum to address concerns through informed discussion and meaningful interaction. "There is no need to be apprehensive about the changes being introduced; these reforms are aligned with present-day needs and national development goals," she added.

During the interactive session, media professionals deliberated on the proposed scheme, its expected implementation in Meghalaya, and how it would differ from the previous programme. Suggestions and feedback were shared to strengthen the scheme and enhance its impact on rural livelihoods.

The workshop was attended by officials from the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), members of the Shillong Press Club, and journalists and media representatives from Shillong.

## National Workshop on Thematic Module Revision: Healthy, Child Friendly, Socially Just & Secure and Women Friendly Panchayat



**NIRDPR faculty members with participants during the three-day National Workshop on Thematic Module Revision for inclusive and people-centric Panchayats**

The School of Excellence in Panchayati Raj (SoEPR) at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India, organised a three-day National Workshop on 'Thematic Module Revision: Healthy, Child Friendly, Socially Just & Secure and Women Friendly Panchayat' from 27-29 January 2026 on the NIRDPR campus.

Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor and Head, CPRDP & SSD, in his welcome address, stated that the workshop was designed to review, strengthen, and harmonise the existing training modules to enhance their field relevance and capacity-building effectiveness. He highlighted that the preparation of GDPs increasingly demands evidence-based planning, convergence across schemes, and strict adherence to indicator frameworks such as the PAI and the XV Finance Commission guidelines. In this context, he emphasised the need to revise the existing modules to reflect updated policies, emerging best practices, state-level innovations, and improved training designs.

Dr Vanishree Joseph, Assistant Professor & Head, CGSD/NRLM-RC, NIRDPR, delivered the keynote address, emphasising the critical role

of empowered Panchayats in localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in advancing inclusive and sustainable social development.

The Lead Sessions on the above-mentioned four themes were led by Dr Sridhar, Health Specialist, UNICEF; Dr Sanghamitra Dhar, Programme Lead, UN Women; Mr Subhendhu Bhattacharjee, Director, CRY; Dr Peter Raj, Associate Professor, KILA; and Dr Mamatha Raghuveer, Founder, Taruni, Telangana.

The workshop brought together experts from academic and research institutions, faculty specialising in social development, elected representatives from high-performing Gram Panchayats, and representatives of organisations working on women and child-friendly initiatives and health.

Dr Deeksha and Dr Tandra Modal, Assistant Professors, SoEPR, and Ms Kakali Bhadra, Sr. Consultant, SoEPR, presented the revised training modules, organising the discussions around a single theme per day. Experts were divided into two groups to deliberate on each theme and develop group presentations. Accordingly, one theme was discussed in detail each day.

On Day 3, Dr Deeksha presented the overall revision points suggested by the experts and outlined the actionable measures to be followed, such as drafting revised modules, updating the sections, adding important new sections, building a repository of case studies, best practices, and learning cases, creating and collating tools - mapping, checklists, interactive Exercises, etc., sharing draft with MoPR, selected states and subject matter specialists for final review and feedback, module validation workshop and pilot.

Dr Deeksha and Dr Tandra Mondal, Assistant Professors, SoEPR, along with Ms K. Vidyullatha, Consultant, SoEPR, coordinated the workshop.

## AD (OL), NIRDPR, Attends Regional Official Language Conference Held at Devi Ahilya University, Indore



*A session in progress during the Joint Regional Official Language Conference of the Central, Western, and Southern Regions*

**A**went to Joint Regional Official Language Conference of the Central, Western, and Southern Regions were held at the Devi Ahilya University campus in Indore (Madhya Pradesh). The conference was held under the chairmanship of the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Bandi Sanjay Kumar.

During the conference, banks, public sector undertakings, and offices from the Southern and South-Western regions were honoured for their commendable performance in implementing the Official Language (Hindi). A total of 80 awards were presented on the occasion. In addition, Town Official Language Implementation Committees were conferred with the Nagar Rajbhasha Award for their outstanding contribution.

Awards were also presented to Central government offices, banks and undertakings under various categories for exemplary work in the effective implementation of the Official Language. The programme was attended by Member of Parliament Shri Shankar Lalwani, Vice-Chancellor of Devi Ahilya University, Prof. Rakesh Swami, Head of the Hindi Department Dr L. L. Reddy, senior litterateur Shri Narmada Prasad Upadhyay, and other eminent personalities. Smt. Anita Pandey, AD (OL), represented the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj at the programme.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Bandi Sanjay Kumar stated that language should not be viewed as a barrier, but



*Smt. Anita Pandey, Assistant Director (Official Language), NIRDPR at the programme*

as a bridge that connects people. He emphasised that under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, India is progressing towards self-reliance, innovation and technological advancement. He longer confined to mere compliance but has evolved into a medium for innovation and technological empowerment.

In her welcome address, Smt. Anshuli Arya, IAS, Secretary, Official Language Department, highlighted that under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister and with support from Digital India initiatives, a significant transformation has occurred in the use of Hindi. She stated that Official Language activities are no longer limited to issuing directives, but are now expanding rapidly through the effective use of technology.

Senior litterateur Shri Narmada Prasad Upadhyay observed that Hindi is not merely a language, but a reflection of cultural consciousness. He expressed confidence that with technological support, Hindi will become increasingly empowered. He further noted that the Southern region has a rich tradition of Hindi, which has played a vital role in fostering emotional and cultural unity among the people of South India.

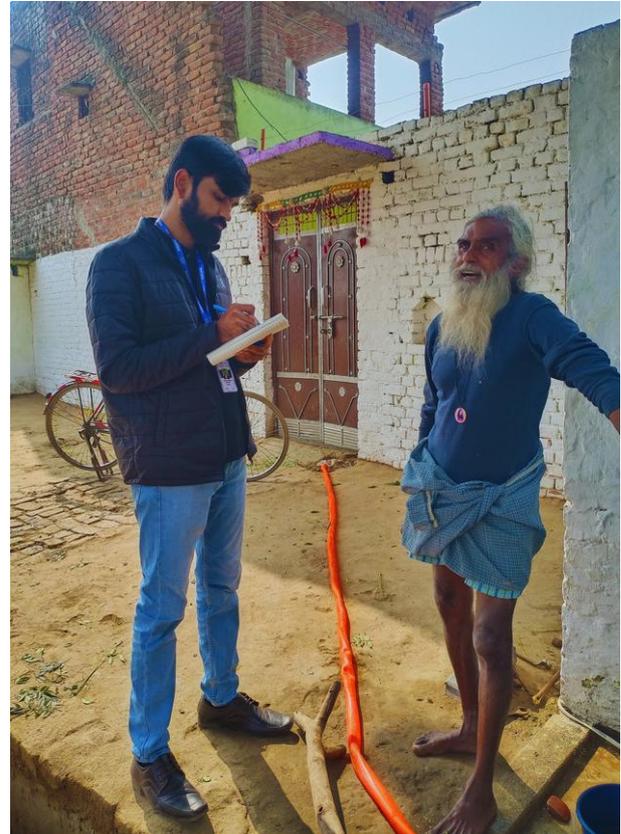
Member of Parliament Shri Shankar Lalwani stated that Indore has also contributed significantly to Mahatma Gandhi's Hindi movement. He added that officials and institutions from the Central, Western, Southern and South-Western regions are being recognised and encouraged through awards for their exemplary performance in implementing the Official Language.

## Learning from Sonsa - When Fieldwork Becomes a Mirror

**Mr Shivam Mishra**

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*The author Mr Shivam Mishra, PGDRDM student, NIRDPR, during his field visit at Sonsa village, Etah district, Uttar Pradesh*

I went to Sonsa village in Etah district of Uttar Pradesh, as part of my official 28-day field visit under the PGDRDM programme at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad. The objective was straightforward - apply participatory tools, study village institutions, understand livelihoods, and document realities. Like most development students, I entered the field with preparation, curiosity, and an unspoken confidence that I knew what to look for. What I did not anticipate was how quickly the village would shift my role - from an observer collecting insights to a participant questioning his own understanding of development. Sonsa did not overwhelm me with visible crises. Instead, it unsettled me through its normalcy.

### When Assumptions Meet Everyday Life

My earliest days in the village challenged the most basic assumption

I carried—that villages are primarily spaces of lack. People were not waiting for schemes, instructions, or solutions. They were busy living. A grandmother offering food without knowing who I was, neighbours asking about my health before my purpose, and families including me in daily conversations without formality - these moments slowly undone the distance I had unconsciously placed between “field” and “self.” Financial struggles were real, but they were not the defining emotion of village life. Contentment, routine, and shared responsibility shaped daily interactions far more than complaints. This contrast forced me to reflect: perhaps what villages lack is not resilience, but recognition.

## What Data Shows and What It Cannot

Formally, my fieldwork relied on Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, livelihood surveys, social and institutional mapping, and in-depth interviews with farmers, youth, women, frontline workers, and Panchayat representatives. These tools gave structure and comparability. They helped identify patterns—small landholdings, dependence on agriculture, youth migration, gaps in service delivery. But deeper learning emerged outside the formats.

During livelihood interactions, farmers rarely spoke about income in numerical terms. Instead, they used phrases like “bas chal raha hai.” Farming here was not a business decision—it was continuity, risk-sharing with nature, and a fallback when no alternatives existed. Migration appeared in data as a statistic; in conversations, it emerged as a reluctant compromise between staying connected and staying afloat. In schools, infrastructure indicators looked adequate—uniforms, mid-day meals, smart boards. Yet teacher shortages, multi-grade classrooms, and additional administrative duties quietly diluted learning outcomes. Data recorded enrollment; lived experience revealed exhaustion.



## Health, Nutrition, and the Invisible Burden



Health and nutrition systems illustrated a similar duality. Medicines were available, and schemes were active. Yet a non-operational Sub Health Centre and delayed appointments meant frontline workers had to fill systemic gaps through their own efforts. Vaccination sessions conducted in private courtyards were not failures; they were adaptations. Anganwadi workers, ASHAs, and ANMs rarely framed these constraints as problems; rather, they treated them as routine. That normalisation itself was telling. Systems here function not because they are perfect, but because people stretch themselves daily to keep them alive. This raised an uncomfortable question for me: how often do we measure outcomes without measuring the human cost of delivery?

## Governance as a Lived System

One of the strongest impressions came from observing village governance. The Panchayat was not an abstract institution; it was the centre of everyday problem-solving. The Gram

Pradhan, Sachiv, and ward members were visible, accessible, and accountable in ways rarely captured in policy discussions.

Monthly Gram Sabha meetings were spaces of real negotiation. Villagers questioned delays, suggested priorities, and debated resource use. A defining moment was the decision to invest Panchayat incentive funds in a Digital Library instead of a Community Hall. The choice was not imposed; it emerged through dialogue. This experience reshaped my understanding of decentralisation - from a constitutional ideal to a lived, if imperfect, practice.

### **Women as the System's Anchor**

Across sectors, i.e. health, nutrition, credit, food security, women formed the invisible backbone. Self-help groups were not merely financial collectives; they were governance actors. Women managed loan rotations, ran the PDS, supported nutrition delivery, and sustained households simultaneously.

What struck me was how SHG loans were often used for health emergencies, education, or housing - uses that fall outside conventional livelihood frameworks. Earlier, I might have categorised this as a deviation. Field experience taught me otherwise. Economic activity cannot flourish where health and dignity are fragile. Context, not compliance, defines rational choice.

### **Youth, Aspiration, and the Absence of Safety Nets**

Village youth carried aspirations - stable income, respect, and independence - that were neither vague nor unrealistic. What they lacked were navigable pathways. Some had created micro-enterprises and service models; others migrated early, not out of ambition but compulsion. The issue was not effort. It was exposure, guidance, and risk protection. Policy often treats youth as beneficiaries. Sonsa showed me they are already actors—operating without safety nets.

### **Reframing Development**

By the end of the field visit, one realisation became unavoidable: development does not mean urbanising villages. If that becomes the goal, we risk eroding precisely what cities struggle to rebuild - community trust, shared spaces, environmental balance, and informal care systems. People in Sonsa did not seek sympathy but dignity, support, and fair systems. Development here was not about transformation; it was about strengthening what already worked and correcting what quietly constrained it.

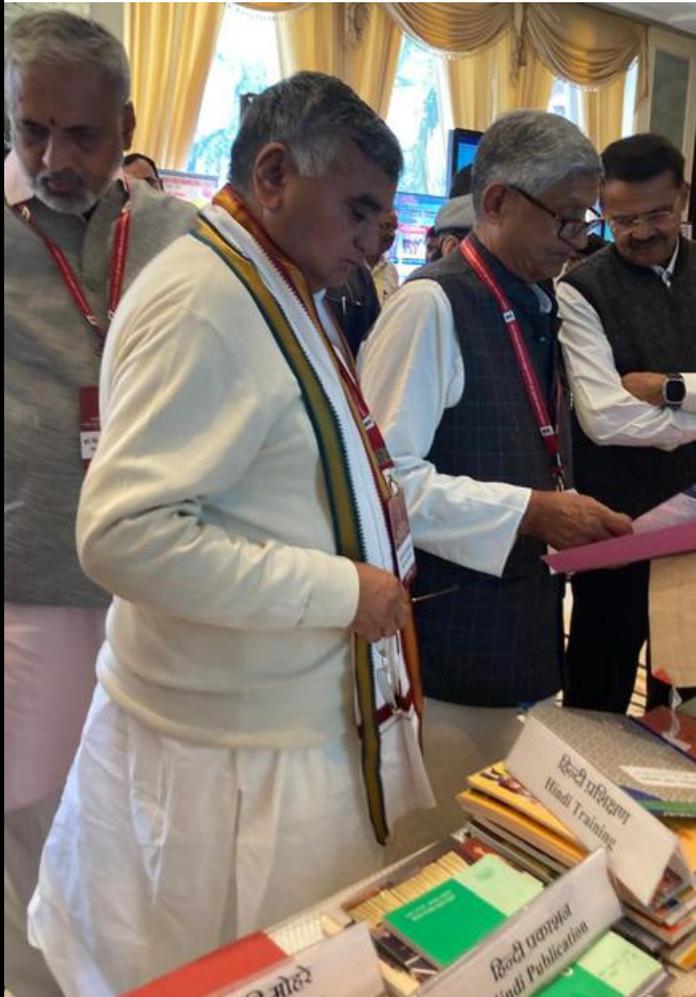
### **Closing Reflection**

This field visit quietly but firmly altered my relationship with the idea of development. I realised that progress is rarely dramatic, that systems seldom move in straight lines, and that solutions cannot be lifted from one context and placed into another without consequences. Much of what sustains village life operates beyond schemes and indicators - in habits, relationships, shared responsibilities, and unspoken understanding.

The most important learning was this: villages do not reveal their realities to extraction. They reveal them to patience. The more I tried to “cover” the field, the less I understood it. The more I slowed down, listened, and allowed discomfort and uncertainty, the clearer the picture became. What initially appeared as inefficiency often turned out to be adaptation; what looked like resistance was sometimes wisdom shaped by experience.

Sonsa reminded me that rural India is not a problem waiting to be solved. It is a living, evolving context that demands respect before intervention. Carrying this understanding forward - into analysis, policy, and practice - now feels like a responsibility rather than a choice. Doing so without losing the humility the field demands may be the most important part of becoming a development practitioner.

## Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Official Language Reviews Hindi Works of NIRDPR



*Members of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Official Language during the review of Hindi works*

The First Sub-Committee of the Parliament on Official Language visited Hyderabad on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2026, to review the progressive use of the Official language at various institutions, including the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad.

Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, welcomed Shri Ram Chander Jangra, Member of Parliament & Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Official Language, as well as other MPs and office-bearers.

Besides the Director General, officials, including Shri Ramchandra,



*Shri Ramchandra, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development; Shri Rajesh Kumar, Assistant Director, Ministry of Rural Development; and NIRDPR representatives Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, Shri Manoj Kumar and Mrs Anita Pandey were present during the inspection*

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development; Shri Rajesh Kumar, Assistant Director, Ministry of Rural Development, and NIRDPR representatives Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, Professor & Head, CPGS&DE; Shri Manoj Kumar, Registrar & Director (Admn) i/c; and Mrs Anita Pandey, Assistant Director (OL) were present during the inspection.

On this occasion, in compliance with Section 3(3) of the Official Language Act, 1963, Hindi publications of the Institute, comprising files, bilingual forms, training materials, translation work letters, gazette notification letters, personal files, bilingual rubber stamps, etc., were on display. The Chairman and the committee members visited the exhibition and praised the works displayed.

## MJCET Conducts Medical Camp under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan



*Villagers availing free medical services during the Medical Camp organised by MJCET under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan at Hanuman Nagar village, with support from NIRDPR.*

As part of its sustained commitment to rural outreach and community well-being, Muffakham Jah College of Engineering & Technology (MJCET) organised a Medical Camp under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) on 26 January 2026 at its adopted village, Hanuman Nagar, coinciding with Republic Day celebrations. MJCET is one of the colleges working on UBA with the guidance of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), a Regional Coordination Institution under the UBA Programme of the Ministry of Education.

The camp was conducted by the UBA Cell of MJCET with the support of Star Super Speciality Hospital, Hyderabad, as a one-day community service initiative to strengthen access to basic healthcare in rural areas. A dedicated medical team comprising two doctors,

two nurses, and five technical assistants provided services during the camp. The initiative was strongly supported by MJCET, with ten faculty members and forty students of the UBA Club actively involved in planning and execution.

Community mobilisation played a crucial role in the success of the camp. Villagers were informed in advance through brochures and traditional tom-tom announcements, with Gram Panchayat functionaries and local youth taking the lead, supported by MJCET students. This collaborative approach ensured wide participation, with around 200 villagers availing themselves of the services.

The camp offered free medical consultations, general health check-

ups, and distribution of essential medicines. Alongside curative services, emphasis was placed on health awareness and preventive care. Interactive sessions were conducted on personal hygiene, balanced nutrition, lifestyle-related diseases, and the importance of regular health check-ups. Special focus was given to explaining the nutritional value of locally available vegetables, fruits, and millets.

UBA Club students demonstrated healthy cooking methods and discussed everyday food practices that help preserve nutrients during preparation and consumption. Awareness was also created on the critical 'first 1000 days' window, highlighting the importance of maternal and child nutrition to ensure children are born healthy and grow up healthy.

Students from various departments assisted in beneficiary registration, coordination, crowd management, medicine distribution, and awareness activities under faculty supervision. The experience offered them valuable

exposure to community engagement, teamwork, and organisational skills, while reinforcing a sense of social responsibility.

The medical camp improved access to basic healthcare, facilitated early identification of common health issues, and enhanced health awareness among rural residents. It also strengthened the relationship between the institution and the local community, reflecting the core spirit of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan—connecting higher educational institutions with the developmental needs of rural India.

Overall, the Medical Camp at Hanuman Nagar stood out as a meaningful and well-coordinated outreach effort, demonstrating how faculty-student participation under UBA can effectively address local needs while nurturing socially responsive professionals.

Dr Mohammad Sadak Ali Khan, Programme Coordinator, UBA Cell-MJCET & Professor, MED and Dr V. Dharam Singh, Co-coordinator, UBA Cell-MJCET & Assistant Professor, MED, coordinated the event.



## Shri T. K. Anil Kumar, IAS, Assumes Charge as Director General, NIRDPR



**S**hri T. K. Anil Kumar, IAS (Karnataka Cadre, 1995 batch) currently serving as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India, has officially assumed additional charge as the Director General of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) on January 27, 2026.

The transition follows the successful completion of the tenure of Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, was formally felicitated during the Institute's 77th Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2026.

Upon assuming charge at NIRDPR, Shri T. K. Anil Kumar interacted with senior faculty members, officers, and staff of the Institute. In his address, he underscored the importance of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions, enhancing evidence - based research, and reinforcing capacity-building initiatives to support inclusive and sustainable rural development. He emphasised the need to align the Institute's training, research, consultancy, and field-based interventions with national development priorities and grassroots governance reforms.

The Institute fraternity extended a warm welcome to Shri T. K. Anil Kumar and expressed confidence that under his leadership, NIRDPR will continue to consolidate its position as a premier national centre of excellence in rural development and decentralised governance, contributing meaningfully to the empowerment of rural communities across the country.

## Valedictory Programme of Vigilance Awareness Week 2025 at NIRDPR



*Prize distribution during the Valedictory Programme of Vigilance Awareness Week*

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad, organised the Valedictory Programme of Vigilance Awareness Week 2025 on 17 December 2025 at S. K. Rao Hall. The week was observed from 27 October to 2 November 2025 with the theme “Vigilance: Our Shared Responsibility.”

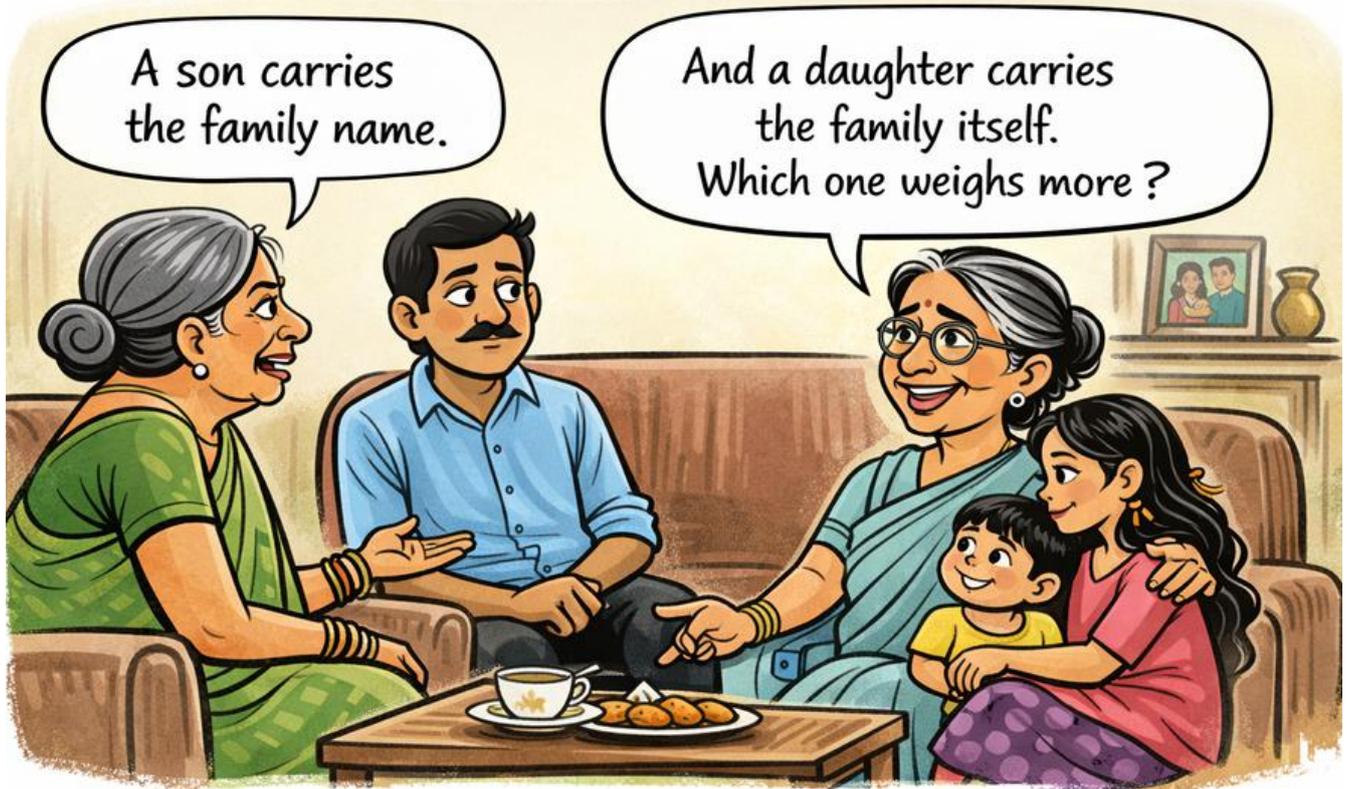
The observance began with the administration of the Integrity Pledge by the Director General, NIRDPR, followed by online pledges by employees and PG students. As part of the programme, Essay and Quiz Competitions were conducted to promote awareness on integrity and transparency. The essay competition focused on the role of citizens in building a corruption-free India, while the quiz covered topics related to vigilance, service rules, and government programmes.

During the valedictory function, Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Chief Vigilance Officer, welcomed the participants and highlighted the activities undertaken. Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, Professor and Head, CPGS, delivered the keynote address, emphasising the importance of vigilance in public life.

Prizes were awarded to the competition winners. In the essay category, Shri G. Praveen (CICT) secured the first prize, followed by Smt. K. Vidyullatha (SoEPR) and Smt. A. Sirisha (SoEPR). In the quiz competition, Smt. Ramadevi P., Shri V. Srikanth and Shri M. D. Ubed won the first, second, and third prizes, respectively. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr Pranab Kumar Ghosh, Assistant Registrar.

## Beyond the Surname: Rethinking the Value of Daughters

**Dr Vanishree Joseph**  
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Real legacy isn't in surnames.

*The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), an autonomous organisation under the Union Ministry of Rural Development, is a premier national centre of excellence in rural development and Panchayati Raj. Recognised internationally as one of the UN-ESCAP Centres of Excellence, it builds capacities of rural development functionaries, elected representatives of PRIs, bankers, NGOs and other stakeholders through inter-related activities of training, research and consultancy. The Institute is located in the historic city of Hyderabad in Telangana state. The NIRDPR celebrated its Golden Jubilee Year of establishment in 2008. In addition to the main campus in Hyderabad, this Institute has a North-Eastern Regional Centre at Guwahati, Assam, a branch at New Delhi and a Career Guidance Centre at Vaishali, Bihar.*



राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण विकास एवं  
पंचायती राज संस्थान

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL  
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**COVER PAGE DESIGN: V G BHAT**

**PUBLISHED BY:**

**JYOTHIS SATHYAPALAN, PROFESSOR AND HEAD, CPGS & DE  
ON BEHALF OF NIRDPR, RAJENDRANAGAR,  
HYDERABAD- 500 030**



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