

STRC NEWSLETTER

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE CENTRE GONDWANA UNIVERSITY, GADCHIROLI

A centre of excellence for sustainable value creation, conceived and funded by Rajiv Gandhi Science and Technology Commission (RGSTC), Mumbai, Govt. of Maharashtra.



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From the CPO's Desk

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To witness Prof. Achyuta Samanta's revolutionary efforts in education for the underprivileged, a team from Gondwana University, led by the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Dr. Prashant Bokare, along with the Registrar, Dr. Anil Hirekhan and Chief Program Officer & Head, STRC, Shri Ashis Gharai embarked on a visit to Odisha to experience the magnanimous and state of the art campus of the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) and the World Skill Center (WSC), Bhubaneswar.



From the CPO's Desk

Empowering Local Communities through Rural Entrepreneurship



Shri. Ashis Gharai
Chief Program Officer &
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Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC) plays a pivotal role in empowering the under-served communities of the heavily forested and largely tribal region of Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. STRC is driving a transformative change by blending traditional knowledge with modern technology to create sustainable livelihoods, particularly focused on strengthening micro-enterprises and small businesses. Key initiatives of STRC include:

Fostering Rural Entrepreneurship around Bamboo

Aimed at transforming locally available bamboo into high-value products, skilling local artisans and promoting entrepreneurship around bamboo based lifestyle-utility products.



Through the Undergraduate Diploma in Bamboo Entrepreneurship and Design, STRC equips students with essential skills in bamboo craft, product design, and business management. The program offers hands-on training to help students develop innovative bamboo-based products such as furniture, home decor, and construction materials, enhancing their employability in bamboo sector. Till date, over 200 jobs have been created for local artisans generating over INR 7.0 lakhs of revenue.

Gondwana Craft – A Gateway to Market Access

To help rural artisans and entrepreneurs access wider markets, STRC has created an umbrella brand, Gondwana Craft, to preserve and promote unique yet dying traditional art forms of the region through a sustainable and viable social entrepreneurship platform.

This physical and digital marketplaces in form of product outlets across nagpur and chandrapur and social media business platform, will showcase handcrafted goods from gadchiroli region and expected to provide artisans with an avenue to sell



their products to the national and international audience. Such platforms are envisaged, not only to highlight the rich cultural heritage of the region but also to ensure fair pricing and enhanced returns, empowering rural entrepreneurs to grow their businesses sustainably. By exposing the local art-forms to the global markets, STRC is creating a powerful eco-system that supports artisan economy.

Fish Farmers' Interest Groups (FIGs) as Units of Fish Business

Considering the huge potential of fish farming as a sustainable livelihood option for local communities in the region, STRC has taken up good quality fish seed production through portable carp hatcheries. Constituting multiple cluster based FIGs, comprising of 25-30 small fish farmers, huge business opportunities can be created.

Ensuring proper market linkages with large buyers and selling of live fishes in and around local market places will surely boost their income.



Reviving Traditional Healing Practices

Focusing on reviving and promoting traditional healthcare practices, rooted in ancient wisdom of Ayurveda and indigenous medicinal knowledge through university platforms like Vaidya Chikitsalays, supports local traditional healers (THs) to offer holistic health services in a dignified manner. This initiative not only creates opportunities to preserve traditional healthcare system but also help integrate it with modern healthcare solutions. It provides an avenue for local healers, to formalize their practices and create employment. Since its inception, in September 2022, nine THs associated with STRC Vaidya

Chikitsalay, have successfully treated over 1800 patients.

Collectivization of Selected Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP)

STRC's NTFP Collectivization Project at Kharkadi, Dhanora is a vital community-led initiative involving a cluster of 10 villages, supporting 365 households. This project aims to generate sustainable livelihoods by facilitating the scientific collection and marketing of commercially important forest products such as *honey*, *tori*, *kusum beej*, *raw bamboo*, *mohua seeds and flowers*. The initiative emphasizes good storage practices, primary processing, and effective marketing strategies. The project has already completed its first cycle generating INR 3.25 lakh amount out of the total collection of 7.5 ton of forest produce.

Gradually, a small primary processing unit would ensure development of multiple products and subsequent commercialization. This approach is designed to improve both the profitability and sustainability of NTFP sales, benefiting primary collectors and expanding market reach. The key focus of the project is on selling the collected produce, with STRC ensuring business linkages for sale of remaining stock and initiate collection of forest produce in the current cycle.





Rebuilding Community Organizations in India

A Pathway to Inclusive Development

In a rapidly changing world, the concept of community organizations have evolved significantly, especially in a country as diverse as India. Community organizations, at its core, aim to empower individuals within a collective group to address common challenges, foster collaboration, and promote sustainable development. However, as India's socio-political, economic, and technological landscape undergoing serious transformation, the need to reconceptualize traditional approaches to community organizations have become imperative.



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Traditional models of community organizations were often limited by geography and accessibility, making them less effective in remote and under-served areas. In current scenario the focus was on decentralized governance and empowering marginalized communities, often through social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These efforts addressed critical issues such as poverty, education, and healthcare in rural and urban communities.

The rapid urbanization and digital revolution of recent decades have shifted the way communities interact and organize, necessitating a rethinking of old paradigms.

The Need of a New Approach

Rural communities in India today face unprecedented challenges, from climate change and environmental degradation to socio-economic inequality and digital divides. To tackle these challenges, a modern approach to community organizations must go beyond the grassroots and integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT), policy innovation, and cross-sector collaboration.

Digital Empowerment and ICT Integration:

The advent of digital technologies has revolutionized how communities communicate and collaborate. ICT offers an opportunity to bridge the gaps between rural and urban populations. Initiatives like the Digital India campaign have already made strides in this direction, but more needs to be done to ensure digital inclusivity, especially for marginalized communities.





Collaborative Governance:

Collaborative governance enables community organizations to work alongside local governments in addressing issues like sanitation, healthcare, and education. Local bodies, such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), can play a pivotal role in this model. By leveraging data analytics and ICT, PRIs can better understand community needs and allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that no group is left behind.

Capacity Building and Grassroots Leadership:

Reconceptualizing community organizations also involves nurturing local leadership. Capacity-building initiatives must focus on empowering individuals with the skills, knowledge, and tools needed to drive change in their own communities. This includes training in digital literacy, project management, and sustainable development practices.

Grassroots leaders, especially women, tribal, and Dalit representatives, should be encouraged to take on greater roles in decision-making. Their lived experiences bring valuable insights into the specific challenges their communities face, helping shape solutions that are culturally and contextually appropriate.



A Holistic and Inclusive Approach

Reconceptualized community organizations model must be holistic and inclusive, recognizing that communities are not homogenous entities. Factors such as gender and geography all play a role in shaping the needs and aspirations of different groups. Inclusive community organization requires sensitivity to these dynamics and proactive efforts to ensure marginalized voices are heard. Programs that address the inter-sectionality are essential to creating sustainable and equitable development pathways.

Rebuilding community organizations in India is no longer just an option; it is a necessity. As the country faces new and complex challenges, the way communities come together to address them must evolve. By embracing digital technologies, promoting participatory governance, building grassroots leadership, and fostering social entrepreneurship, India can pave the way for a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future.





Transforming the Idea of Education for All : KISS & KIIT, Bhubaneswar is setting true benchmarks



Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Bhubaneswar, represent the revolutionary effort of Prof. Achyuta Samanta, in providing quality education to thousands of marginalized and tribal children of the state, free of cost. Based on the belief that education is a human right that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of background, circumstances and social standing, KIIT and KISS, is setting true benchmarks. To experience the magnanimous and state of the art campus first hand, a three member delegation led by the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Dr. Prashant Bokare, embarked upon a two day visit to Bhubneswar, the State Capital of Odisha.

The KIIT and the KISS management extended great hospitality to the visiting team and ensured that the team gets a glimpse of 80000 students in 30 different campuses managed by 20000 employees, comprising of world class sport infrastructure, a 2600 bedded multi-speciality hospital, laboratories, large food courts, hostel accommodation and life in campus in general. The campus visit was followed by an hour long interaction with Prof. Achyuta Samanta, which was truly inspiring.

The visit left a lasting impression on the Gondwana University delegation, inspiring them to explore similar initiatives that could be implemented to benefit underprivileged communities in Gadchiroli region. Dr. Bokare expressed deep admiration for Prof. Samanta's dedication and vision. The team returned with valuable insights that could potentially shape the future of educational policies and initiatives at Gondwana University. The delegation included the Registrar, Dr. Anil Hirekhan and Chief Program Officer and Head, STRC, Shri Ashis Gharai.

The visit also included a brief tour of the World Skill Center (WSC), a state-of-the-art facility designed to equip students with advanced vocational skills, preparing them for global job markets. The visiting team was apprised on the centre's mandate to bridge the gap between traditional education and industry demands, thereby empowering students with the skills needed to thrive in the modern economy.



STRC Vaidya Chikitsalay

Inaugurated at Lloyds Kali Ammal Hospital, Hedri

In a major step towards enhancing healthcare services in the South Gadchiroli region, Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University and Lloyds Metals (Lloyds Infinite Foundation) have come together to establish an extension of STRC Vaidya Chikitsalay at



Lloyds Kali Ammal Hospital, Hedri. The inauguration ceremony for this new facility was held on July 16, 2024. Dr. Prashant Bokare, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Gondwana University, inaugurated the facility.

The event was graced by eminent personalities including Kirthy Reddy, Director, Lloyds Infinite Foundation; Lt. Col. Vikram Mehta, Resident Director, Lloyds Metals; K. Satya Rao, Advisor, C.S.R.; and Shri Ashis Gharai, Chief Program Officer & Head, STRC, along with other distinguished doctors and staff members.

During the event, Shri Ashis Gharai delivered an introductory speech outlining the inception of STRC Vaidya Chikitsalay, which was first launched in the University campus during September 2022. He apprised the audience on the day to day function of the OPD and gradual progress in local response in recent times with over 1,500 patients already benefited from treatments provided by local traditional healers associated with the OPD. Hon'ble Vice Chancellor conveyed his optimism on the STRC initiative at Hedri and extended his best wishes Lloyd Infinite Foundation for this noble initiative. Lt Col Vikram Mehta also expressed gratitude to Dr. Bokare and Shri Prabhakaran, Managing Director, Thriveni Earthmovers Private Limited, for their unwavering support.

It is expected that the new unit of STRC Vaidya Chikitsalay will cater to the healthcare needs of the local communities with support from the LKAM hospital.



STRC Vaidya Chikitsalay now has a branch at Hedri catering to communities in the southern blocks STRC and Lloyds Infinite Foundation (Lloyds Metals) sign Memorandum of Understanding

A Window into the Future: STRC Centre for Circular Bio-Economy in Gadchiroli

Ideas have been floated and taking shape for a potential collaboration between Environmental Management Centre (EMC) Pvt. Ltd. / Ekonnnect Knowledge Foundation (EKF) and Science & Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University, Gadchiroli.



A couple of preliminary interactive meetings of major stakeholders and authorities (in online mode) held during last month, led by Dr. Prasad Modak, Corporate Consultant (Environment & Infrastructure), in presence of Dr. C. D. Mayee, Chairman- Governing Body (STRC) and Dr. Prashant

Bokare, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, and other eminent officials including Prof. Ajay Deshpande, Adjunct Professor at IIT Bombay, Prof. Sachin Mandavgade of VNIT, Nagpur, Prof. Alok Bhargava, Senior Fellow, Centre for Global Sustainability (CGS), Smt. Pragati Gokhale, Advisor, Rajiv Gandhi Science & Technology Commission (RGSTC), Nagpur, Govt. of Maharashtra and Ms. Shilpi Bakshi, Vice President, EMC The interaction where an idea to establish the idea of a STRC Centre for Circular Bio-economy in Gadchiroli was conceived. Dr. Modak provided an exhaustive overview of circular bio-economy to the participants. During the meeting, Shri Ashis Gharai, Chief Program Officer & Head, STRC shared the need of scientific resource mapping and STRC's current efforts in creating avenues of livelihood enhancement for local communities through optimum utilization of forest resources.

The CoE will leverage the expertise of EMC and EKF to develop a framework for advancing a circular economy in Gadchiroli. This includes mapping resources such as non-timber forest produce, metals, minerals, and waste streams to support a circular bio-economy. The initiative will also involve stakeholder mapping to define roles in promoting material circularity and exploratory studies to assess the potential for bamboo and steel sector circularity. A brief proposal is being developed in this regard.

Dr. Niteen Patil, Vice Chancellor, MAFSU, Releases Quality Fish Seeds in the On-Campus Water Bodies of Gadchiroli District Open Jail

A joint venture between MAFSU and District Open Jail through STRC, Gondwana University, Gadchiroli

In a collaborative effort to provide future economic opportunities for the inmates of Gadchiroli Open Jail through skill-based training a new initiative in partnership with the Science & Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University, Gadchiroli and Maharashtra Animal & Fisheries Sciences University (MAFSU), Nagpur.

STRC in collaboration with MAFSU has selected four ponds within the premise and on July 7, 2024, Dr. Niteen Patil, Vice-Chancellor, MAFSU, Nagpur visited the Gadchiroli Open Jail and released 30,000 Indian Major Carp Fry into the ponds, marking the beginning of this aquaculture project.

The event was attended by key figures including Dr. S. V. Upadhye, Director, Instruction and Dean (Faculty, Veterinary Science), MAFSU, Nagpur; Dr. S. W. Bonde, Dean, Faculty, Fishery Science, MAFSU, Nagpur; Shri. Sanjay Tripathi, Director and State Coordinator-Prison, Maharashtra State; Shri. Sameer Dongre, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Fisheries, Gadchiroli; Shri. Ashis Gharai, Chief Program Officer & Head, STRC; Dr. Atul Dhok, Assistant Professor, Animal Nutrition; Shri. Sainath Chavan, Growel Feeds; Dr. Prashant Telvekar,



Assistant Professor, MAFSU, Nagpur; Dr. Rajeev Rathod, Assistant Professor, MAFSU, Nagpur; Shri. Ajay Shahare, Scientific Officer, STRC; and other officials from STRC were present.

Shri. Anand Kokate, Superintendent, Open Jail, Gadchiroli briefed Dr. Patil about various initiatives aimed at helping prisoners become self-reliant upon their release. Following this, Dr. Patil's team provided essential resources including feed and water quality maintenance materials. In his remarks, Dr. Patil emphasized the value of Integrated Fish Farming and Animal Husbandry as supplementary agricultural businesses, urging farmers to adopt holistic farming practices for enhanced income. He commended the department's efforts and expressed his hope for the success of the projects implemented by the prisoners.

Glimpses of the Month



Bamboo Plantation Initiative Under Manav Vikas Mission (MVM)

As part of the Manav Vikas Mission funded project, a bamboo plantation initiative was undertaken to enhance bamboo resource base at Maldugi, Kurkheda. In this context, a total 200 *Dandrocalamus strictus* (*Manvel*) bamboo saplings were distributed among beneficiaries. This initiative aims to empower bamboo artisans to have a sustainable source of mature bamboo poles as raw material for craft development, ensuring long-term benefits and enhancing their livelihoods.



STRC Completes First Batch of Bamboo Grower Certificate Course

STRC, as the registered Training Centre and Training Provider (Acharya Chanakya Skill Development Center) under Maharashtra State Skill Development Society (MSSDS), Mumbai, successfully completed its first batch of Bamboo Grower (260 hour curriculum spread over 45 days). This course provided both theoretical and practical knowledge on bamboo species selection, sapling propagation, planting techniques, and plantation management, equipping them with comprehensive knowledge essential for aspiring bamboo growers.



Shri Sanjay Daine, I.A.S., District Collector, Gadchiroli

On April 24, 2024, Shri Sanjay Daine (I.A.S.), District Collector, Gadchiroli, visited STRC, Gondwana University, gadchiroli.

During the visit, Shri Ashis Gharai, Chief Program Officer & Head, STRC, provided a detailed overview of STRC's initiatives. The District Collector explored the products developed by Gondwana Craft, Vaidya Chikitsalay, Model Production Unit, and one-year Bamboo Entrepreneurship and Design course.

Impressed by the efforts, the District Collector encouraged STRC to boost the promotion and marketing of products under the Gondwana Craft brand. He also assured support and space within the District Collector's office premises for showcasing these unique tribal products.



Ms. Snehal Dhokey, Assistant DGFT, Ministry of Commerce, GoI



On July 10, 2024, a team from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Government of India, led by Ms. Snehal Dhokey, Assistant DGFT, visited STRC. The visit focussed on exploring the Gondwana Craft initiatives of STRC and to assess the potential for expanding the reach of Gondwana Craft products in international markets. The delegation interacted with STRC staff to understand the craftsmanship and unique aspects of the products, discussing opportunities for collaboration and export strategies to enhance the global presence of Gondwana Craft.

IIT Bombay Delegation, Led by Dr. Narendra Shah, Member Secretary, RGSTC, Mumbai

On July 27, 2024, STRC had the pleasure of welcoming a delegation of esteemed professors and PhD students from IIT- Bombay, led by Dr. Narendra Shah, Member Secretary, RGSTC, Mumbai, Government of Maharashtra. The visit provided an opportunity for knowledge exchange. The visiting faculties explored STRC's ongoing projects and initiatives for regional development.



Team of Officials from NABARD

On 2nd August 2024, STRC had the privilege of hosting the District Development Managers (DDM) from Chandrapur and Gadchiroli, along with newly joined officers from NABARD's Pune Regional Office. During the visit, the officials were introduced to the various initiatives and activities of STRC. A productive discussion followed, focusing on the collaborative projects to be undertaken by STRC and NABARD, aimed at driving sustainable development and empowering local communities in the region.



Chief Functionalities of Sudhamani Social Foundation



On August 27, 2024, Shri Pankaj Gautam, Founder, Sudhamani Social Foundation and Managing Director, Salemark Ventures Pvt. Ltd. accompanied by his colleague Ms. Rujuta Luktuke, Mumbai, Director, Sudhamani Social Foundation and Freelance Senior Journalist visited STRC to explore potential collaboration opportunities focused on Gondwana Craft products, training, and establishment of product outlets. The meeting centered on developing a strategic framework to enhance the visibility and market reach of Gondwana Craft, while also providing skill development and training to local artisans. This collaboration aims to strengthen the traditional craft sector and create sustainable economic opportunities in the region.

Political Representatives from Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS)

Representatives from the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) visited the STRC on July 9, 2024. The visit provided an opportunity for the MNS delegation to gain insights into STRC's various initiatives aimed at fostering development through science and technology in the region. The representatives showed keen interest in STRC's ongoing projects and explored potential avenues for collaboration to further benefit the local communities in Gadchiroli.





Conceived and funded by Rajiv Gandhi Science and Technology Commission (RGSTC), Mumbai, Government of Maharashtra, Science & Technology Resource Centre (STRC) is an autonomous institute established in concurrence with Gondwana University, Gadchiroli in 2014. As a centre of excellence for sustainable value creation, STRC is leveraging local resources, relevant knowledge and appropriate technologies for human capacity development. STRC acts as a catalyst to science and technology based development of the under-served tribal communities of the Gadchiroli region and as a bridge between knowledge activities of the University and enhanced livelihoods in the neighborhood.



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