

Best Practices Series - 3

Community Engagement Case Presentations



राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद्

विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग का स्वायत्त संस्थान

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Foreword

Benchmarking 'best practice' as a means for continuous learning through sustainable innovations is familiar in the world of business management. In recent years, the approach is being adopted in many fields, including higher education. Many organizations are coming up with their 'best practices database' to demonstrate in practical ways what actually works in nourishing quality efforts. In the Indian situation, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, charged with the responsibility to serve the quality cause of higher education, has this task cut out for itself. The NAAC recently embarked on collecting data on the best practices in various aspects of an institution's functioning, in accordance with the 12-point agenda envisaged for the twelfth year of NAAC's endeavor in the field of higher education. The objective has been to identify, not what constitutes a best practice at a theoretical level, but those best practices that already exist in the feasibility domain and have been practically proven as such so that they can be emulated elsewhere triggering localized action.

A practice qualifies to a 'best practice' status if it resulted in high-value impact on any aspect of educational activity in an institution. It is different from 'standard practice' in that it is value-added standard practice. Again, what is best practice may depend on viewer's perspective and time and context. Continual review and improvement of a current practice becomes necessary to elevate it to the status of a best practice, more so in the present day scenario of fast-paced educational innovations. There is sometimes a hesitation on the part of some institutions to share their best practice data. Sharing, apart from being an exercise in institutional philanthropy, is one way to enhance competitive advantage, as the borrower institution sources its learning to the originator. There is actually a view that the best practices are 'borrowed' practices in that they already stand authenticated in an institutional context. Borrowing apart, each reflective institution, over the years of its existence, should also strive to discover what is the best practice for it to enhance institutional effectiveness.

The present volume is on best practices in community engagement. 'Community Engagement' by the higher education institutions (HEIs), in the Indian context, unlike in the case of advanced countries, is still, at best, modest in scale, and often

not a formal component of academic training of student. In the advanced countries, institutional orientation to community engagement is thorough, while with us, though the topic is frequently discussed among colleagues in the field, in practice, it is still at an evolving stage. Reasons for this may be many. There is, however, a need to give a concrete shape to institution-community partnerships, since both higher education and community play important roles in modernizing a country's human resource, and their interests have a natural affinity. Further, the best practices in community engagement need to be identified in order to disseminate them among the HEIs in the country for the benefit of the academic fraternity and the society at large. Recognizing this need, the NAAC decided to collect data on best practices in community engagement as may exist in our colleges so that they can be printed in this book form facilitating their wider use.

My colleagues Latha Pillai, Manjunath and Wahidul Hasan have worked on this project and I appreciate their effort. I thank the colleges for sending us valuable data on best practices in community engagement as experienced by them. Several experts have made valuable suggestions in bringing the book to this form. I am thankful to them too. Needless to say, the success of this effort would depend on the extent of effective and enthusiastic adoption of these best practices by the HEIs in our country.


(V. S. Prasad)
Director

1. Introduction

Community involvement in the realm of higher education institutions is not new. Guided by mutual benefit, there always existed some form of exchange of knowledge, resources and services between the HEIs and the proximate communities. However, institutionalized practice of such exchange, termed 'community engagement', has been gaining in significance in the Indian situation only recently, though, in the form of service-learning, it has for long been a formal characteristic of college life in some countries like the US and the UK.

With reference to an HEI, in the broader sense, the term 'community' includes outside teacher community, research community, parent community, business community, employer community and others, each having potential to drive the HEI's development when productively engaged. In what ways can this engagement come about? Can there be a 'best practice' in the context of campus-community relations? What has been the Indian experience in this respect? It is to find answers to questions such as these and to draw up a recipe for documenting and disseminating the community engagement activities at the national level that the National Assessment and Accreditation Council set out on this project.

To begin with, about 120 highly-rated accredited institutions spread all over the country were requested to send example/s of 'best practice' in community engagement as experienced by them. The choice of institutions was made proportionate to the number of accredited institutions, region-wise. But, the response from the different regions has not been uniform, though the overall response from the institutions to our request has been gratifying. While inviting responses, the NAAC had also communicated a suggestive format to the institutions in order that there can be some degree of resemblance in their perception of 'structure' of the response and that the responses themselves can be processed into a book form. Most colleges have made use of the format, and in many cases, there has been more than one response. Indeed, short-listing has not been an easy task for us.

The term 'Community Engagement', it appears, has been perceived rather nebulously by some since, out of about 50 responses received, eight could not possibly be termed community engagement activities and had to be filtered out in the first

instance itself. Of the remaining, thirty were short-listed based on certain criteria like region-wise representation, impact, evidence of consistent will to sustain the practice, time-span to ascertain if it is an institutionalized practice or just a one-shot event and so on. Though, while suggesting format for response, a cap on the number of words was indicated by the NAAC, a good many institutions have somehow missed out on this aspect and sent in very lengthy responses, some reading like annual review reports on extension activities of the institutions. These had to be necessarily condensed/cast aside. In some responses, there is evidence of deep institutional involvement with the society, while a few were so sketchy that they could not be included. Some needed more extensive editing than others. The draft, thus prepared after a methodical in-house exercise by the internal team, was then subject to expert review. The final list that came out after review had 15 samples with suggestions to seek more inputs/refinements from the concerned institutions. While editing the samples, the style of presentation had to be necessarily changed in several cases in order to conform to NAAC requirements, of course, taking care to keep the essence unaltered.

As part of expert review, a meeting was convened on April 17, 2006 at the NAAC office in which the national experts and the academic staff of NAAC took part. Prevailing views, arguments and counter-arguments were put forth in the meeting. The day-long deliberations went into all the relevant questions. The key ones may be recounted here.

What is to be included in the publication? What should the title for the book be? Can a community engagement activity be accepted as an institutional practice, even if it is implemented to meet curriculum requirements? As answer to the last question, two divergent views crystallized: one, if it is a curricular activity, there is not anything very laudable or 'best' about it, as it is then done just as a matter of course; the other, unless made integral part of the curriculum, civic engagement would largely remain a haphazard affair without any lasting positive effects.

Are the samples collected here 'reported' best practices or are they authenticated by NAAC field visit? It was agreed that, initially, it should be acceptable to popularize a set of practices that have demonstrably benefited the proximate community. 'Field-level validation' need not be a priority. This should only be appropriate since the responses have come from accredited institutions and a

measure of authenticity is implicitly guaranteed by their mention in the relevant institutional documents like Self-Study Report and Peer Team Report.

What does the term 'best' in best practices connote? Are 'all' the practices exhaustively considered? That is clearly not feasible. Indeed, it is to be admitted that there is some vagueness in the term 'best practices'. It is actually intended as a relative term here. With some External Quality Assurance Agencies, it is 'Good Practices', a normative term. The NAAC uses in its assessment manual 'Healthy Practices', a contextual term. Though these terms are distinct and have subtle shades of difference in their meaning, they have often come to be used interchangeably. 'Standard Practice', a prescriptive term, is also in vogue. A best practice is considered a standard practice *plus*. What actually is this *plus*? Different answers are possible. All in all, it is a case of best practice in community engagement if in some way it embraces the cause of sustainable development, or of promotion of peace and social harmony and well-being, or of conflict-resolution, or the cause of environmental preservation.

How does the third dimension of higher education actually work? Should community engagement be conceived as a part of institutional responsibility to society or be just a part of curriculum? In general, if NSS – led or curriculum-led or just episodic, the practice is not included here, except if considered meritorious for some other reason. The cases presented here constitute a diverse set as they have emerged out of different contexts – institutional surroundings, institutional curriculum, etc. and at different points of time in the life of institutions. This might, at least in part, be the reason for wide variations in their scope and spread.

Why is this best practices approach being advocated? A best practice, besides itself being a thorough evidence for institutional performance, also validates the NAAC philosophy that emphasizes leading by example, not precept or normative ideal. Further, such an approach coincides with accreditation agenda in two important ways: one, it aims at institutional improvement; and two, it is for promotion of quality in higher education. The motivation for this entire exercise stemmed from a need to prompt renewal of civic mission of higher education institutions. The NAAC's role in this is assumed minimal in that the desired national impact of this exercise depends mostly, not on the NAAC, but on the institutions themselves. The NAAC can only join in to assist the institutions to sustain, strengthen and spread the practices for the cause of larger good.

To sum up the objectives behind this exercise, it may be apt to recall the two questions that were posed at the time of eliciting responses:

- What can an HEI do for productive community engagement?
- What can community engagement do for an HEI?

It is our hope that these questions are answered in some measure by this effort. It is also our hope that even if at the level of detail, local coordinates and considerations may vary, calling for contextualization, the core elements of a practice should remain common and implementable in fellow-institutions with encouraging circumstances.

2. Practices

The informational input, received in reply to the request from the NAAC, from higher education institutions on best practices in community engagement has been enormous. The input, generally, comprised examples of different ways to achieve productive engagement between institutions and communities. But, these examples varied widely in regard to extent of detail, relevance, clarity and applicability elsewhere. Further, not all could fulfill the requirements of the present context, nor stand expert scrutiny. Short-listing has been the logical consequence.

The principal objective of this exercise, as already stated, has been to establish a fundamental basis for extensive adoption of proven instances of practices in community engagement by the institutions in the country. To realize this objective, practices that consist of imaginative approaches to attain larger social good are included in the collection. Preference has been accorded to those practices that contain 'detailed knowledge' of all the relevant aspects so that interested institutions feel enabled to take proper advantage of them.

Here, it should be appropriate to provide a hint of the central idea in these practices. The practices focus on instilling values among youth as exhorted by Swami Vivekananda, cultivating sensitivity among students towards education of the poor children, issues of social medicine, tribal education and development, care for destitute women prisoners and the elderly, blood donation for common good, insurance for deprived sections, the challenge of spreading literacy to one and all, efforts at preserving ethno-medicinal biodiversity and treasured attributes of tribal life, way to live a good life even while keeping within meager means, and some environmental issues of current interest.

The needs of the institution-community matrix that motivate engagement are dynamic and complex. Nevertheless, all things considered, meaningful community engagement should bring benefits for communities and continuous academic development to institutions. This long-established criterion has remained the core guiding principle in making the choice of practices. Further, as noted earlier, the practices have been put through critical review process in stages. The finally approved fifteen practices are presented here.

2.1	Vivekananda Sammelan
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The context

Society cannot be blind to happenings in the education system. The last two decades have witnessed momentous changes in our education system, not all of them desirable. Education, in the present globalization context, has come to be treated as a tradable service/commodity. The resulting cultural crisis and value decay have thrown up a new term 'value education', making it appear as though mere education is totally value-less (at worst) or somewhat value-deficient (at best). The original Indian ethos, as perceived by Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his illustrious disciple Swami Vivekananda, envisages education as man-making education. The goals of education in a society, to be meaningful in the larger sense, need to be aligned with its values. It is to bring about, sustain and strengthen this alignment that the project, *Vivekananda Sammelan*, widely supported by the governmental authorities and stakeholders in education, took shape.

Objectives of the practice

To inculcate in the school children, from primary to higher secondary levels, human values like selflessness, devotion to duty, the joy of dedicated service, purity, honesty, integrity of character, truthfulness, tolerance of other faiths, liberal outlook, scientific temper, and catholicity among others.

The practice

The college organizes *Vivekananda Sammelan* every year in a particular district of West Bengal. The event is organized so as to culminate in the celebration of Swami Vivekananda's birthday on January 12, observed throughout the country as National Youth Day. The MHRD has been extending an annual grant of Rs. 1,00,000/- for the purpose, for the last six years.

During the last ten years, each year, one district in the state is chosen. Each district is divided into five or six zones depending on size and topography. There is an elaborate organizational structure to oversee smooth conduct of cultural and sports competitions among students of various schools of the district, from August/September to December

each year. On an average, three to four hundred schools with three to four thousand school children take part every year.

All competitions center around the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda and the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India. The topics chosen for cultural competitions are meant to inculcate in the young minds high moral, ethical and spiritual values. Sports, games and yogasanas, dear to the great modern saint who wanted young India to develop “muscles of iron and nerves of steel”, are part of the *Sammelan*. The winners are awarded prizes in the form of books and certificates during the ceremony held on the Sunday nearest to January 12. The day is marked by discourses by monks from Ramakrishna Mission and other eminent personalities, discussions and debates on problems of modern youth and their solutions, talks on personality development through harmonious development of heart, head and hand, and question-answer sessions. Participants include students, former students, parents, and all those eager to learn about India’s ancient cultural and spiritual heritage.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Obstacles faced include motivating schools authorities restricted by government circulars and motivating parents and teachers. Ways adopted to overcome obstacles include sustained persuasion of students, teachers and parents on the pressing need for values and wholesome development of student personality, utilizing services of zonal committees formed for the purpose and of the motivated teachers and schools authorities to prevail upon the reluctant among them so that they can appreciate the need for the effort.

Impact of the practice

The impact is widespread- over college student-teacher community, former students of the college, student community in the target group, teacher community of the target group schools, and society at large. When the students and teachers of the college ‘carry’ the educational ideas, vision and ideals to other schools and educational institutions, it is a very different experience for them. It awakens a new consciousness and a sense of self-introspection among them. Questions arise: ‘Are we really committed to the ideas and ideals we are trying to impart to others?’ This would have a truly sanitizing influence on

their minds and hearts. A sense of satisfaction begins to pervade them as they 'pass on the cup of inspiration, the cup that has satisfied their thirst'. Taking part in the team effort also generates a healthy fellow-feeling. Indeed, evidence of salutary influence of the *Sammelan* has led to organizing *Sikshak Sammelan*, for teachers alone, for the last couple of years. The former students make a significant contribution to the effort through *alumni association*. Their emotional gratification apart, the ex-students come closer to their *alma mater* through this practice resulting in their renewed commitment to values they inherited during their student life. The children and families of alumni get naturally involved in one way or the other leading to desirable transmission of lofty ideals down the generations. The impact on students in the target group, at an impressionable age, is most pronounced. There is palpable hunger for the life-giving and invigorating message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the interior areas and rural areas of the state. There is evidence to suggest that questions about a variety of youth-related problems have found answers by contemplating on the noble ideas transmitted through the *Sammelan*. In trying to train their students for various competitions, teachers in schools get a chance to study Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature deeply. Many teachers have taken individual initiatives to mimic the effort, though on a smaller scale, in their own home districts. The prize-distribution ceremony on January 12 draws participants from all sections of society, without any discrimination based on age, position, gender, religion, caste, etc.. Monks, professors of various universities and researchers on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature are speakers on the occasion and answer questions from participants. The societal participation level has been growing so much so that there has been a demand for a separate *Sammelan* for the general public.

***Resources
required***

The most important resource required is the human resource – motivated students, teachers, staff, ex-students, volunteers, well-wishers, etc.. The financial resource from the Department of Youth Affairs, MHRD, Government of India has been of great support. Ramakrishna Vivekananda Bhav Prachar Parishads of the various districts in the state have extended their unstinted cooperation placing their

infrastructural resources at the disposal of the college for successful conduct of the practice.

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2.2	Social Labs: Anganwadis as Community Resource Centers
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The context As a college solely devoted to higher education in social sciences, the college is convinced that the communities should become its social laboratory. Here, one of such labs (Community Organization lab) with focus on just one of its activities (transforming Anganwadis as Community Resource Centers) is described.

- Objectives of the practice*
- To provide the students an exposure to contemporary social reality;
 - To introduce the students to the pedagogical process of sociological reflection and analysis based on empirical observation;
 - To develop the skills of integrating theory and practice in students; and
 - To facilitate community empowerment through a convergence and involvement of various departments.

The practice In consultation with the programme officials, two Development Blocks in Thiruvananthapuram District (Kerala), viz, Vamanapuram and Kazhakuttom, were selected. Twenty-five students of the third semester MSW Course were sent to the various panchayats in these blocks.

Each student was assigned two Anganwadis whose functioning was rated below average. The students were expected to liaise with all the stakeholders of the Anganwadi, including government officials to elicit their cooperation in achieving the desired objectives. Each student would visit the assigned Anganwadi twice or thrice a week and organize programmes with the following focus: promoting Anganwadis as Community Resource Centers; inculcating value of healthy practices among adolescent girls and mothers; and developing life-skills in adolescent girls.

The programmes undertaken in one academic year with Anganwadi as Community Resource Center were:

1. Four Medical Camps;
2. Six Eye Test Camps;
3. Three Blood Group Identification Camps;
4. Eighty Awareness Classes to mothers in the fifty Anganwadis;
5. Formation of 50 Adolescent Girls Clubs having membership of 12-28 girls each;
6. Four Tour Programmes, each including mothers, children & adolescent girls;
7. A final one-day seminar and cultural programme named “Varnolsavam” (Festival of Colors) in which 400 girls participated;

A publication on the experience titled “FLAMES’ was brought out.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Time constraints; lack of experience in community work; lack of cooperation from officials; lack of awareness on the part of the community about various schemes; general apathy and cynicism towards government programmes; and resource constraints.

Strategies used to overcome obstacles include: detailed planning of the programme with all the stakeholders; regular interaction of students at various levels; personal meeting by the staff of the college with various officials; timely supervision and guidance; convergence of various programmes; sharing of experiences; and monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

The learning impact of the programme was seen on the community, on students and on the other partner organisers.

On Community

- a) Anganwadis became centers of Human Resource especially for the mothers and adolescent girls who could be effectively motivated to become vehicles of life-skills and health education.
- b) Anganwadis could provide them with programmes they could not get anywhere else, such as the tour programme.

- c) The stigma related to Anganwadis as a place for poor children was removed by Medical Camps, Eye Camps and other such programmes.

On Students

- a) Students have developed greater social sensitivity and self-confidence.
- b) They have improved their organizational skills.
- c) They have improved their ability in Group Dynamics skills.
- d) They have gained more knowledge in these areas.
- e) They have become effective health- and life-skills trainers.
- f) The entire activity has been an experience in sensible citizenship for the students.

On Partner-Organizers

- a) Personal meeting of staff with officials, students and community made the convergence of various programmes achievable.
- b) Closer interaction of the PR Is (Panchayat Raj Institutions), Community, Govt. Departments and other stakeholders with an academic institution became possible.

***Resources
required***

Quality human resources; awareness and willingness to engage in community activities; finance to meet various expenses; availability of experts to interact with beneficiaries; organisational knowledge of community to generate a people's movement.

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2.3 Cancer Awareness Campaigns

The context

Cancer of the reproductive organs is very common among women. In fact, in India, cancer of the cervix of the uterus is the commonest cancer that afflicts women besides breast cancer. This cancer has been causing many deaths and infirmities among women of the developing countries. The most interesting aspect of this cancer is that it is preventable. The developed world has taken appropriate preventive measures and successfully tamed this problem. However, in our country, prevention effort has not succeeded so far due to lack of community engagement which results from lack of awareness that these cancers are preventable. In this context, it was felt that medical fraternity should reach out to community and engage them in cancer prevention strategies in order to reduce the burden of disease.

Objectives of the practice

This practice is aimed at reaching out to the community with the message of cancer prevention. Once the masses are aware of the prevention possibilities, availing the screening facilities will become a felt need. To make cancer prevention a felt need of the community is the objective of this community engagement program. In addition, exposing the medical students to community and its needs is the second objective.

The practice

In association with the department of Preventive and Social Medicine, the plan for organizing a cancer awareness campaign is worked out. The site for the camp is selected and the selected village is reconnoitered by the department representatives and available facilities are assessed. Undergraduate and postgraduate students of this institution are encouraged to participate in the practice to sensitize them about the needs of the rural public. Posters prepared by the students are used to give publicity and are displayed in the exhibition. Wide publicity is given about the date, the place and the objectives of the camp. Local opinion leaders and healthcare workers are also involved in spreading the information. On the day of the camp, the team of medical officers, medical students and supporting staff with the necessary equipment

and drugs sets up the camp in the community. A health exhibition is set up for education of the masses. Health talks are delivered to the participating members of the community followed by conduct of the screening procedures. Free general health check-up is also done and free medicines are distributed to make the camp attractive to the masses.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Inadequate pre-camp publicity by local community representatives; clientele not coming for follow-up treatment; etc..

Impact of the practice

A large number of women from the community attend these activities and acquire knowledge about safeguarding their health. The fall-out of these camps has been that a number of women spontaneously start coming to the health facility for periodic testing. This goes a long way in reducing the occurrence of frank cancers. In addition, a number of women harboring early stage disease are also detected and appropriately treated.

Resources required

Medical equipment, exhibits for exhibition and human resources.

Contact person for further details

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2.4 A Model for Tribal Village Development

The context

The Programme Officers of the N.S.S. unit visited this tribal village and were shocked at the poverty, illiteracy, infant mortality and unemployment of its people. The mindless destruction of the adjacent forest, rich with valuable indigenous species, also stunned them. The Programme Officers interacted with the villagers and found the males resigned to their fate and resistant to any idea of change. The women stayed behind their doors and veils. Since the village was in close proximity with the college, almost at a walking distance, it was decided to adopt the village and thereafter regular interactions, camps, awareness programmes followed.

Objectives of the practice

- To secure the livelihood of the people through forest conservation;
- To empower women; and
- To ensure education and primary medical care for children.

The practice

It was decided to focus on three major areas—(i) forest conservation, (ii) women empowerment, and (iii) health and education of children. The villagers started physical watch of the forest every day on turn basis to protect the forest from timber mafia. A Vana Samrakshana Samiti (VSS)-Forest Protection Committee- was formed and it entered into an agreement with the Department of Forests, Government of Orissa. Under this plan, the villagers are given the ownership of the forest. The villagers protect, maintain, and further enrich the forest. They enjoy total ownership of minor forest produce, whereas the major harvest is shared equally between government and the village. Women were encouraged to form Self-Help-Groups (SHG) to carry on small scale saving, sanitation, and anti-liquor campaign programmes. The dried- out branches in the forest are collected by women workers and are deposited with the SHG in a co-operative venture which in turn sells it to the public as fuel wood. A kindergarten school was established to ensure education for the children of the village. The school has been taken up by the Government under Sarba Sikshya Abhiyan (Education for All), and formal education is now provided upto class V. All the

parents have been motivated to have the mandatory vaccination for their newborns.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

It has been very difficult to dissuade poor and illiterate villagers from consumption of liquor, encourage them to send their children to school and refrain from quacks for redressing their ailments. The establishment of a school and regular health programmes in the village has created a favorable environment for the children to be induced to come to the school.

Impact of the practice

Every villager got a share of timber of about Rs.25000-30000/ as per the JFM plan during the Super Cyclone in Orissa. Besides providing timber and firewood for the household needs of the villagers, the enriched forest now provides employment to several tribal families who collect firewood from it and sell it to the SHG. The preservation of the forest has led to the rise of sub-soil water level. Women have become articulate, aspiring and capable of taking leadership of the community to bring in decisive changes. Consumption of liquor has been reduced to a great extent by the efforts of women SHG. Almost all the children are school-going. Children completing their education in the village school are now sent to other schools for further study. The night-time coaching class provides additional academic support to children of tribal families. Also, all the infants in the village have been duly vaccinated. On the whole, the effort has had a salutary impact on tribal lives.

Resources required

Motivators-mainly teachers and students of Dhenkanal (Autonomous) College District medical authorities; Local NGOs like SUSHRUSA, SPRUHA; and officials of the Forest Department, Government of Orissa.

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2.5 “Learn with Me”

The context

As has usually been said, “Education is a key to development”. There was a felt need to initiate a programme on Adult literacy for illiterate and neo-literate females in society and the state of Meghalaya, the success of which could serve as a small indicator of progress and development of a community and the society as a whole. There was an urgent need for making some efforts towards uplifting the literacy scenario in the state. These young girls and women who are underprivileged needed to be empowered with at least the minimum level of literacy.

Objectives of the practice

- To cultivate in the students the spirit of active involvement in the service to the community;
- To contribute to the cause of Total Literacy Campaign through participation of students in their own localities; and
- To empower the domestic workers and underprivileged sections of the society through literacy.

The practice

“Learn with Me” is a literacy programme where the students are initiated into the concept, need and importance of teaching the illiterate and neo-literate adult females in their locality and elsewhere. The State Resource Center (SRC), North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) trained 73 students of the department in the basic methods of teaching illiterate girls and women in 2005. Students, in consultation with the members of the faculty, identify the illiterate females in the various localities where they reside. They begin a dialogue with them stressing on the need for learning to read and write. Once they win over the confidence of the adult learner, suggestions are given to the learner about working out a convenient time schedule for both to meet. Care is taken to see that the student goes to the residence of the learner or the location fixed by her and begins the teaching. The feedback of the students involved in the campaign was heartening. Each student or

group of students follow their own methods of teaching though following the three primers provided by SRC, NEHU stressing on the aptitude of the learner.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Lack of motivation amongst the learners is the main obstacle reported by the students taking part in the activity. Time constraint has been faced by some of the students of the college as the schedule at the college is heavy and the learners are working for their livelihood. The faculty finds it difficult to monitor the programme on certain occasions due to lack of sufficient time.

Impact of the practice

The programme has made a difference to the lives of the poor and illiterate women. Today, a number of illiterate women can identify all alphabets distinctly, be it in Khasi or English. They can spell any given word and pronounce it accordingly. These women now read newspapers, identify names of shops, signboards, etc., can manage additions and subtractions and have improved in multiplication. The above improvement also reflects the feelings of the students who are involved in "Learn with Me". In short, this programme proved a rewarding strategy to help combat the problem of illiteracy in the state, particularly among the underprivileged women and young girls in the city of Shillong.

Resources required

The learning materials have been provided by SRC, NEHU. Hence, the need for resources is minimum.

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2.6 Rehabilitation of Women Prisoners

The context

Inaccessibility, unaccountability and public indifference are most conducive to violation of human rights of prisoners as well as prison officials. The Central Jail being just next door, the college got involved in the rehabilitation of prisoners. This was intended to bridge the missing link between higher education and the community and help students to acquire an understanding of crime and punishment.

Objectives of the practice

- To study the criminal justice system;
- To make students empathetic towards offenders, particularly women;
- To protect the human rights of women prisoners;
- To learn the best practices in other prisons, initially in India; and
- To suggest changes in the Prison Act of 1894, which is more than a century old and has a colonial bias.

The practice

Weekly visits – Initially, the college students visited the jail on a weekly basis and engaged in imparting literacy and moral education to the prisoners. The visits helped build rapport with prisoners and added to their sense of self-worth; also, the activity added to the sense of accountability of the prison officials. For students, it led to an awareness of the loopholes in the criminal justice system. On realizing the sordid plight of women prisoners, the college began focusing on their rehabilitation.

Legal intervention– Ninety-ninepercent of women prisoners are from rural background. In association with lawyers, the college offers legal knowledge and intervention for petty offenders who would otherwise languish in prison.

Cultural programmes – Students are trained to stage cultural programmes. These provide entertainment and moral education to the inmates. The students are exposed to ground realities in prisons.

Counselling – The college offers counseling to women inmates. Rural women are homemakers and are deeply rooted in their home and hearth. Any displacement for whatever reason causes them untold

misery and distress, often altering their course of life irreversibly for the worse. Individual, attentive and unbiased listening to each one gives them a new lease of life.

Occupational therapy – Music reduces stress levels. The women inmates and constables are trained in playing the harmonium and singing bhajans. Prayer becomes for women prisoners a rich soothing experience rather than a mere ritual.

Paper-bag making project - Students of the college procure newspapers, the raw material needed for bag-making, and market the products themselves; the proceeds from the sale of these articles are given to prisoners for purchase of their toilet items. The practice has also had other salutary lateral consequences.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Visits by outsiders to the jail are a threat to corrupt prison officials and are strongly discouraged. Thus, permission for visits are not easy to get. However, firm commitment by the college got due recognition by the favorably-inclined prison officials.

Impact of the practice

The practice has, to a great extent, bridged the gap between pure academics and community engagement. The students have developed a spirit of social service and commitment to the community, specially the imprisoned. The teacher looking after this practice was invited by the Director of the Mulla Committee for Prison Reform to be part of a 3 member team to make a study of 'Custodial institutions for women in the state of Madhya Pradesh' and offer recommendations to the National Council for Women. The report was sent to the Chairperson, NCW in April 2005 and is available at www.humanrightsinitiative.org.

Resources required

Resources like newspapers, glue etc. are raised from the local community from time to time with no difficulty. Motivated students spread the awareness among the student community and outside as well.

Contact Person for further details

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2.7 Service-learning through Blood Donation

<i>The context</i>	The community-based learning combines traditional classroom instruction with community-service to enhance the learning of the students and civic participation. The college's focus for community improvement and engagement connects academic program with community service so that students, faculty and community partners can forge linkage between theory and practice, between knowledge and action and between the resources of institution and the community development.
<i>Objectives of the practice</i>	The objective of the practice is to engage community to create closer ties between institution of higher education and communities they serve with the result to deepen the quality of learning and discovery.
<i>The practice</i>	Maharaja Agrasen College organizes regular blood donation camps. During the last four years, the college has collected 1494 units of blood in collaboration with Red Cross Societies and PGI, Chandigarh. The Institution aims at ensuring easy accessibility and adequate supply of safe and quality blood and blood components collected from voluntary blood donors to those in need. The blood is stored and transported under optimum conditions with the help of Red Cross Society. Transfusion is always under the supervision of trained personnel. Under the policy, blood transfusion is available to people irrespective of their economic or social status. Total Quality Management approach has ensured smooth conduct of Blood Donation Camps and follow-up work.
<i>Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them</i>	Obstacles faced include: inadequacy of resources; non-availability of latest technology for operating the blood transfusion services; and lack of extensive awareness programs.
<i>Impact of the practice</i>	The practice has made an impact on community, students, and teachers. Donated blood is being utilized by people and

institutions not only in Haryana but also in neighbouring areas. The blood is also being utilized by the patients suffering from thalassemia, AIDS and Hemophilia, etc.. The voluntary blood donation camps have resulted in great impact on the students as well as teachers. The impact is also apparent on personality development, moral education and on civic responsibility and is reflected in reduced indiscipline and enhanced sense of the responsibility among the students towards the college. It has also created a sense of managerial ability among the students for organizing such type of events in the college.

***Resources
required***

Community is engaged for raising financial resources for conducting various programmes of blood donation successfully. Efforts are also made to make the blood transfusion services viable through non-profit recovery system.

***Contact person
for further details***

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2.8 Caring for Senior Citizens

The context

With the advancement in the medical science today, the life expectancy has been increasing resulting in the phenomenon of 'population ageing'. This significant rise in the number of senior citizens and their proper health care and privileges for them are matters of great concern and challenge before us and especially before higher education institutions which can orient common people towards this noble task.

Objectives of the practice

- To awaken the sense of responsibility amongst students towards their parents and grandparents;
- To help the senior citizens residing in near-by old-age homes; and
- To understand the psychology of the aged and help them lessen their pain and emotional stress.

The practice

The teachers and the students of the various organs of the college like NSS, NCC and Clubs of the college visit old-age home situated at Guru Teg Bahadur Colony, Batala to enquire about their requirements, problems and facilities. The students are grouped and trained to take initiative and solve their specific problems like basic needs, medical needs and emotional needs. Students are asked to write about their experiences of the visit to old-age home and take pledge to be sensitive to the needs of the old in their family and surroundings. The students of the college make donations to "Helpage India", an organization working for the cause and care of the elderly in India for the last nearly three decades and associate with its activities. The emphasis is not just on donating money but reviving the age-old cultural values of India that regard the old as an asset and not a burden and give them the much-needed company and feeling of belongingness. The college also conducts workshop on 'Importance of balanced diet for various age groups', with special emphasis on the problems of old age and the ways to minimize them through diet-management.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

There are always financial constraints. These are sought to be overcome with the help of various clubs and societies of the city.

Impact of the practice

In the present-day society, the emotional bond between parents and the children seems weakening for various reasons, giving way to individualism among children. While for youngsters, their perception of home as a cherished place to go back to has been shattered before their very eyes, for the old, indifference by family members has assumed menacing proportions. In this context, this practice has certainly made an impact. It has extended a helping hand to the aged citizens of the local and surrounding areas, and has also infused a sense of responsibility and respect amongst the students towards the aged people. The HEIs can awaken the students to realize their responsibility towards the senior citizens.

Resources required

Finance is the crucial resource.

Contact person for further details

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2.9 Social Insurance Awareness Programme for BPL Community

The context

The level of awareness about the insurance products in the social sector among the public is very low. Due to illiteracy, negligence and lack of correct communication from the sources concerned, the poor are not capable of utilizing the immense protective coverage made available by the Government of India through the public sector insurance companies. In certain cases, even the educated consumer is unaware of the various insurance products available in the market.

Objectives of the practice

- To create awareness of the various insurance schemes available in the social sector to the underprivileged masses;
- To inculcate a sense of social responsibility in students; and
- To create a sense of security among the Below Poverty Line (BPL) community.

The practice

The college initiated spreading the message of insurance products as Social Insurance Awareness Programme to the masses below poverty line through the students as a part of “*Service to the Society by the Students (SSS)*”.

A press conference was conducted to explain about the programme and media requested to help create awareness among the people.

A popular insurance company conducted a separate training camp for the students for two days to give them training on the selected insurance products and explained their salient features.

The social insurance awareness programme was conducted for two consecutive days by 9 teams consisting of 9 members each, headed by a lecturer in Commerce in 9 selected centers where BPL people normally reside or work.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Obstacles include motivation of BPL people and of students and teachers to provide time and efforts for the cause. Ways to overcome obstacles include sustained persuasion, educating and motivating the BPL people and creating awareness among them about the insurance benefits.

Impact of the practice

The programme has covered 876 policies of different insurance products and collected Rs.33,000 as premium from unorganized sector people in just one day. The first ever-attempted programme has created not only awareness among the public but also received appreciation from all sections of the society. The programme is becoming a model in the region for implementing the government schemes through the students.

Contact person for further details

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2.10	Total Literacy Drive
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The context

Education for all is a basic need and right of every citizen. Illiteracy is a menace to a civilized society, more so in a country of diverse people. Ignorance is exploited by a few ill-intentioned elite for bettering their prospects. The pioneers of the college, sensitive to this problem, made it a policy and duty to eradicate the intellectual poverty. They had a conviction that education and only education can provide a lasting solution to the problem of material poverty.

Objectives of the practice

- To eradicate slavish mentality and to bring an awareness among the rural population about the need and the right for education;
- To prevent dropouts and guide them on the right path; and
- To make the rural students better prepared to pursue higher studies.

The practice

Education for all is being implemented at various levels beginning from kindergarten to educated employees. The school-dropouts-prevention project seeks to prevent children from turning into street children, child laborers and vagrants by offering them intensive assistance to go back to school. Dropout-girls and potential dropout-girls are sponsored by the project to ensure their continued education. They are guided and trained to take up various trades like tailoring, knitting, soap-making etc.. All the primary school children who frequent Don Bosco Center and primary school children from village schools are thoroughly screened by a doctor who is a volunteer on the project. He follows it up with on the spot medications, free of charge. The Association of Mathematics Teachers, of the Department of Mathematics, is yet another enterprise in community service catering to the needs of the Mathematics teachers in the schools in and around Tirupattur.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them Lack of proper inter-connectedness between the college programmes and the village environment and lack of rural orientation in the syllabus are the main obstacles. The autonomous status of the college has helped the faculties to give the syllabus a rural slant. Convincing the parents was an obstacle. Planning program execution in consultation with District Education Officer and Headmasters of schools and other local authorities has helped in its smooth implementation.

Impact of the practice The Total Literacy Drive has made it possible

- to prevent dropouts;
- to create environment conducive for studying;
- to improve the performance in examinations;
- to empower students to go for higher education;
- to ensure that the rights of the children are taken care of; and
- to promote volunteerism and community-based work in the field of education and child empowerment.

Resources required Finance, teachers and social workers

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2.11	Using Infrastructure and Learning Resources for Social Transformation
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The context

The tribals of Gujarat have natural resources and traditional, practical knowledge of medicinal plants and their working. However, due to displacement, migration and education, this knowledge is dying out. There is an urgent need to collate this traditional wisdom as well as save the precious medicinal and other plants from disappearing. Also, the tribals need to get educated if they have to subsist in modern day society.

Objectives of the practice

- To involve the College Faculty in undertaking socially relevant research related to marginalized groups and endangered biodiversity.
- To set up medicine-men network for documentation of ethno-medicinal biodiversity of a selected tribal group.
- Environmental sensitization of students of distant tribal areas of Gujarat.
- To save the dying species of plants, especially medicinal plants.

The practice

The college has started a project called Project MRL (Monitored Reinforced Learning) for the tribal schools. The Computer Center prepares remedial lessons. Experts go to the tribal belt to train local teachers/ teaching assistants in those areas. This learning process is monitored on monthly basis by a local cell, set up by the efforts of the college. The Xavier's College Campus has over 900 species of plants including several plants of ethno-medicinal significance whose traditional tribal usage has been documented. Interdisciplinary research involving the staff and students of the Botany, Biochemistry and Biotechnology Departments and the Xavier Research Foundation has enabled the documentation of usages and its preparation in CD format. Xavier's College invites tribal medicinal practitioners to interact

with the students. The students learn from these practitioners the uses of various medicinal plants and document the data.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Lack of computers, land, expertise and finance are the various obstacles faced during the implementation of the project.

Impact of the practice

The use of Computer Monitored Remedial Learning, what started with a few schools has risen to 44 schools, catering to nearly 3000 students. The three-year project entitled "People-Forest-Laboratory Linkages for the Conservation of Ethno-medicinal Biodiversity", funded by the Gujarat Ecology Commission has been successfully completed. One hour long program on the project has been aired by All India Radio, Vadodara on two consecutive days. A program for Doordarshan has been recorded and will shortly be aired. A CD, containing information of 100 most significant ethno-medicinal plants of the Vasava tribals, is to be released very shortly. The possibility of making medicinal plants of the tribal belt a livelihood option is being actualised.

Resources required

Computers, land, expertise and finance are the various resources needed for the project. The College Human Resource - staff members have been involved in the implementation of the project.

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2.12	Change of Life-Style through Low-cost Nutrition, Hygiene and Relaxation Techniques
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The context

The sensitive and active students of the college see the petty shop keepers, hawkers, the chaiwala, mobile canteens etc. daily, struggling to make both ends meet. These small-time businessmen strive intensely for food, shelter and clothing of their families; but, in the process, end up losing all the charms of life. Most of these people are also deprived of the basic human living conditions of health, hygiene and food. The students and teachers, on talking to a few of these people, realized that they seem to have forgotten that they have an equal right to life and life can be celebrated even when the resources are scarce. The students felt responsible as sincere citizens to apply their education and values imbibed at the college to serve their community.

Objectives of the practice

- To teach these members of the low-income group to maintain hygienic environment and take nutritious and balanced diet;
- Teaching effective, inexpensive and less time-consuming relaxation practices; and
- To provide management students first hand experience for devising marketing and sales strategies for these low-income groups.

The practice

The students approached the principal and their teachers with the basic idea of rendering this sort of a service to their immediate neighborhood and thus contributing their bit to the community in the surroundings. Realizing the benefit that could accrue to all the stakeholders of this exercise, the principal agreed to the concept. Internal Quality Assurance Cell of the college was given the responsibility of monitoring the same. Initially, about 80 students volunteered for this noble service. The students collected the required data complemented by direct one to one discussions about the lifestyles with members of these low-income groups through questionnaires. As the data started accumulating, the teachers helped students to sieve

out the relevant information. Subsequently, resource persons from the other colleges and society were involved. The management students also approached and discussed financing on easy terms for these low-income groups. The government authorities were also approached to set up public toilets at the required localities for these people who did not have toilets at home and were littering their surroundings which were the main cause of their unhygienic living and ill-health. Various groups such as those advocating yoga and 'Art of Living' etc. were also approached by the students to work out mental and physical relaxation techniques for these people. After extensive meetings, discussions and deliberations with the nutrition experts, medical experts, local authorities and others, a plan of action was drawn up. Thus, the implementation of this community engagement project has been truly a team effort involving the whole college, its management, the alumni, the target group, local authorities and representatives of society at large.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

The vendors were reluctant to participate and some vendors and hawkers insisted on making some financial security available to them as a necessary condition for participation. A few of the parents were a little apprehensive about their daughters visiting slum areas and mixing with the target group. This obstacle was overcome by inviting the parents to the college and the teachers explaining the importance of this project for the community and how the same would enhance the personality of their wards, grooming them into more sensitive and responsible adults. The problem of resource for the project was solved by the Management of the college and separate funds were given to IQAC for smooth conduct of the whole exercise.

Impact of the practice

The impact of this project has been multi-dimensional and evident on all the stakeholders of the practice. The target low income group now have a better idea about the market demand and strategies. They formed a care-association which is being run by themselves for their children, aged and the sick turn-by-turn. Confident that their families were safe and in proper custody, the men are now able to

concentrate better on their work. The health of the shop-keepers and their families is showing a positive sign, leading to their improved working capacity. The health and cleanliness standards have improved life-style. A major intangible benefit that emerged was the change in attitude of the target group towards life and society as a whole. They are now seen to be able to face challenges of life in a better way and are ready to make efforts to change for the better, instead of just drifting through life with each passing day listlessly with the sole purpose of just making both ends meet. The students are seen to have matured into more sensitive human beings with right attitude for dignity of labor and towards other human beings. Teachers are now feeling more equipped to groom their students into better citizens. The college and also its surroundings have benefited immensely. The surroundings are much cleaner and neater and the activities have improved the ambience of the college.

*Resources
required*

The basic resources required for effective implementation of this project were time, resource persons, stationary and access to the college computer lab.

*Contact person
for further details*

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2.13	Study of Arsenic Contamination in Ground water in parts of Bihar
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The context

Arsenic contamination of ground water was discovered first in the riverine deposits of Bangladesh and then in Bengal Basin by mid-eighties. A naturally occurring metalloid, arsenic is a slow bio-accumulative toxin, with frequent irreversible symptoms among its victims. In 2002, a school teacher living in Ojhapatti village in Shahpur block, Bhojpur district, became very concerned after his mother and wife died of liver cancer and other family members developed skin lesions. He took water samples from family tube wells to the School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, the analysis of which revealed high arsenic content. The discovery of arseniferous aquifer in a region further upstream of the Bengal Basin raised apprehensions about the spatial spread of this dreaded contamination. Thereafter, under the initiative of P.H.E.D. (Public Health and Engineering Department), Government of Bihar, and UNICEF, the Department of Environment and Water Management, A.N. College, Patna, began intensive arsenic detection work of all public hand pumps for possible contamination. The study area, as per the guidelines received from UNICEF, has been confined to a 10km. belt along the River Ganga, in Patna, Bhojpur and Vaishali districts. It has a total population of 1400516 [Census 2001].

Objectives of the practice

- To prepare a database of arsenic contaminated groundwater sources and map the spatial extent of arseniferous aquifers, for public awareness and adequate mitigation strategies by the government.
- To train students in working at grassroot level in the field of environmental impact assessment, by exposing them to field surveys, laboratory methodologies, data analysis and mapping techniques.

The practice

The PROTOCOL formulated by Core Personnel of Project Arsenic [Principal Investigator, Coordinators I&II], and later slightly revised

as per ground requirements by UNICEF and P.H.E.D., Government of Bihar, now being followed, has the following components –

- Testing of water samples from groundwater sources by Field Test Kits [FTK].
- Random verification of FTK results by UV Spectrophotometer/A.A.S. (Atomic Absorption Spectrometer).
- Retesting of all water samples registering 40 ppb (parts per billion) and above in FTK
- Marking all water sources testing 40ppb. and above with red paint [*unsafe*] and those sources with less than 40 ppb. with blue paint [*safe*].
- Recording location of each tested water source with GPS, (Global Positioning System) followed by GIS mapping.
- Involving students in each of the above mentioned procedures after giving them required training. Their participation and contribution to project work form a part of their course curriculum.
- Spreading awareness about the problem among the affected villages, interacting with them about immediate mitigation measures; getting regular feedback from the villagers about possible cases of arsenic victims; and, reporting the same to all the stakeholders for further action.

Initially, all the confirmatory water sample tests by AAS were conducted by Sriram Institute of Industrial Research, New Delhi. This college does not possess an AAS. In the second phase of this project, under support from UNICEF, UV Spectrophotometer is being used in the department's laboratory to retest water samples. The laboratory even tests water samples brought in by rural people, for arsenic contamination.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Obstacles include the following: In the absence of updated District and Block Maps, the project team encountered problems in locating villages. Previous arsenic contamination detection work by other agencies was conducted randomly, and information about their findings had only served to spread panic among affected villages. This project team encountered a lot of pessimism among rural population. There was strong disbelief among the villagers about arsenic contamination, as the water consumed by them appeared and tasted clean. Once convinced about arsenic contamination in particular sources of drinking water, villagers demanded quick action. Student Field Assistants were being forced to test water samples from private hand pumps, thereby creating a lot of time-lag in field work, as well as pressure on limited number of Field Test Kits allocated to the project.

Following strategies were adopted to overcome the obstacles.

- Field Group Leaders and students interacted positively with the village community and convinced them about the gravity of the problem.
- Panchayat heads were asked to report about possible physical symptoms of arsenic poisoning, which was well received.
- Villagers were asked to stop drinking water from “red” painted hand pumps, and water samples brought to college lab tested free-of-cost for the rural poor.
- PHED -published pamphlets on the basis of the team’s findings and distributed them among the affected villages.
- Within a span of 18 months, 19,387 drinking water [aquifer-based] sources were tested for possible arsenic contamination, of which over 7000 sources had contamination levels ranging from 1 ppb to 1861 ppb [AAS tested], highest contamination being three times more than that found in Bengal basin. PHED, ICEF and other stakeholders are now moving in for immediate mitigation measures.

Impact of the practice

- Since contaminated aquifers are also being tapped for irrigation purpose, there is now an increasing possibility of arsenic having entered the food chain. Further study in this field is urgently required.
- Students trained for field work were also provided with latest research inputs on groundwater arsenic contamination and its impact which they conveyed to the village elders. It was noted that the rural poor, who were initially cynical about the whole exercise, gradually became convinced and cooperated with the project team members at every step. The villagers provided valuable location-inputs on the new settlements. The information provided by the village community helped the project team in tailoring the field data format as per requirement. The rural community cooperated in collecting relevant information, and after obtaining the arsenic contamination pamphlets, participated in spreading the message about the problem. In all the water samples collected, information about the depth of particular sources and the period of their use was also provided to the team.
- At present, there exists no medical support to deal with cases of arsenic poisoning in the study area. On being shown photographs of visible symptoms of arsenic poisoning, in each village, the community identified the members among them who had similar symptoms. Skin lesions, keratosis, melanosis, digestive disorders resistant to current drug usage were noted. High death rates in certain arsenic hotspots also exist, although medical confirmation of arsenic poisoning is still awaited.
- Today, the village community in arsenic hotspots are eager to have a continuous arsenic monitoring system in place. The Department of Environment and Water Management receives regular water samples brought by these rural masses, which are tested for arsenic contamination free-of-cost for the rural poor. However, this noble cause needs to be sustained with additional funds in the department that has the essential infrastructure and trained researchers in place. Today, the

Department of Environment and Water Management in the college has become the information resource center for groundwater arsenic contamination and mitigation for all the stakeholders in the society.

- The department's participation in the project has helped to showcase an instance where active interaction between academics and societal grassroots has served as an important linkage in discovering the nature of an environmental problem and in providing the base for launching mitigation measures by the authorities.
- The students have had a "hands-on" experience about the interdisciplinary research methodology in the field of Environmental Impact Assessment. Their field and laboratory work, comprising part of their course-curriculum, have equipped them with the wherewithal of such further studies.
- PHED, Government of Bihar, and UNICEF have been kept periodically informed about the findings, and they have already initiated mitigation strategies by capping all the high arsenic contaminated hand pumps.
- Their mitigation measures also include harnessing of "safe" water sources, either by boring new tube wells or by constructing open wells in affected areas. Repairing of dead wells is also underway.
- The state government is also stressing on rain water harvesting, although the success of this measure will depend upon the number of concrete rooftops available in the villages.
- Villagers are now clamoring for better health facilities from the authorities.

This project has done pioneering work in detection of arsenic contamination in the three districts of Bihar-Patna, Bhojpur and Vaishali. Its 3-pronged effect is as follows:

1. That the institution, with adequate financial support, can effectively harness its faculty members and student community in meaningful interdisciplinary research.

2. That community cooperation, in Bihar's rural landscape, can be obtained and sustained through dedicated research team members.
3. That the government and other stakeholders, in such vital issues as drinking water quality, can successfully utilize and involve academic expertise existing within the state. This would lend them the crucial support in meeting their policy targets.

***Resources
required***

The following resources are used in this work-

National Chemical Laboratory [Pune]-supplied Field Test Kits; UV Spectrophotometer with complete set of arsine generators; chemicals and glassware; G.P.S. Sets; computers and peripherals; training facility in the usage of Field Test Kits, G.P.S. and UV Spectrophotometer.

The following resources are urgently required to fulfill the requirements of the arsenic affected community-

1. Arc GIS 9 software for accurate location-references of arsenic hotspots. Two Core Personnel have already received UNICEF sponsored training in this software.
2. Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer for testing the content of different forms of arsenic [trivalent or pentavalent] in water samples, as well as in human pathological samples for determining arsenic poisoning. At present, the AAS equipment in the state are either not calibrated or are dysfunctional.

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for further details***

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2.14	Watershed Development Management
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The context

Water is the elixir of life. Though India is one of the wettest countries in the world, water scarcity continues to haunt various parts of India with varying intensity. For example, all along the Western Ghats, the total amount of rainfall is between 3500 to 4500 mm and yet there is an acute shortage of even drinking water during the summer in a majority of villages in the area. Long queues of people waiting to collect water from a community well and women trekking long distances to fetch water are a common sight in this region. The district of Dakshina Kannada is in an advantageous position, being in an area where there is sufficient or more rainfall. But, most of it flows into the ocean causing soil erosion and depletes the forest cover. The ground water level is very important to retain the soil moisture and to sustain the entire flora and fauna throughout the year. In this district, the ground water level is sinking alarmingly fast. An open well dug fifteen years ago, which used to have about 3 to 6 feet of water up to the month of May, now dries up completely in January. The college campus faced a similar problem that led to identifying watershed management as a proper means to achieve positive results. Four big tanks were built to collect the gushing rain water and sink it for the dry season. So, water level in the wells of the neighborhood increased considerably. This is very important to retain the soil moisture and to sustain nature. Bore wells were initially considered a blessing to relieve this problem. But, it is now proved that unplanned watershed management with increased number of bore wells depletes water which was there from pre-historic times.

Objectives of the practice

- To generate an awareness among staff and students about the importance of rainwater harvesting and watershed management;
- To arrange for educational visit to see and gain practical knowledge on the know-how of watershed management;
- To organize seminars to transfer the knowledge gained to a larger community;

- To adopt this program in communities and villages where there is scarcity of water; and
- To adopt simple and feasible watershed management techniques in ones own backyard.

The practice

The watershed management exercise was undertaken effectively in five phases. The project site at the target village covers an area of about 300 acres belonging to 45 families. Eight staff members took the initiative in starting this project. There were natural resources at the disposal of this village but the villagers were poor and did not have enough knowledge with regard to rainwater harvesting. The water level could not be maintained till the summer season. Against this background, the project was launched in the form of several visits to sensitize and motivate the villagers. Experts were drawn to educate them through lectures, demonstrations, workshops, slide shows and field visits to places where watershed management was successfully implemented. They were trained in methods of rainwater harvesting and watershed management like constructing of trenches, soak pits, dams to ensure that water sinks and does not flow. In addition, this project covered aspects like organic farming, livestock improvement, fodder development, agro-forestry and community development.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Obstacles include the following: distance between the model village and the campus restricted the number of visits to these villages; paucity of funds to carry on the activities required for the project; the availability of the villagers only on weekends since they were all daily-wagers; and lack of expertise because of which the staff members had to train themselves before disseminating information and orientation.

Strategies adopted to overcome obstacles:

- Goodwill of interested team members by providing private transport.
- Support of management, a few benefactors, AIACHE and raising of funds in college through the 'Christmas Tidings' a public show.

- Generosity of time and long hours of work of team members helped in successful meeting and training of villagers during weekends.
- The team members gained expertise through seminars, workshops, field visits and interactions with the experts in the field.

Impact of the practice

The members of the village formed self-help groups and bought seventy cents land for office and community activities, which was an important outcome of the project. The villagers testified that their wells which supplied water for both drinking and irrigation purposes have a higher standing water level of up to 10 feet from an initial 2 – 3 feet. The quality of soil in the area has changed and there is more moisture in the soil which will facilitate the growth of microbes, percolation of more rain water in the monsoons to come, faster growth of trees and saplings.

Over a period of time, the team is recognized as resource persons and the focus is now shifted to disseminating the message to as many places and people as possible. Some of the beneficiaries are Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Youth clubs, NGO's, Schools, Colleges, Parishes and the Diocese.

Three of the team members have gone to places outside the country like 'SAME' in Tanzania and Nairobi in Kenya in the month of October-November 2004. The people in this region were economically and socially backward. They were illiterate and unaware of alternate sources of water, employment and usage of their natural resources. Industrial development was unheard of and they relied on imports. They lived in groups who belonged to Muslim, Christian and Lutheran sects. In spite of these divisions, they lived in harmony. The women folk worked in the fields. The standards of education were high, but majority of the children were deprived of higher education due to non-availability.

The school children were educated and trained in watershed development. They were interested and fascinated to learn new ideas. They interacted on issues like education, health and environment.

The concept of open-well system was discussed for perennial water supply. Since the terrain was hilly, construction of large ponds at low lying region was suggested. The system of community gobar gas plant was introduced to reduce felling of trees and strengthen community spirit. Litter and household waste were aplenty in these areas. Hence, they were trained in utilization of these through composting and obtaining valuable manure. They were encouraged to start self-employment / community-based employment in order to reduce and eradicate unemployment. Sandmulching technique was recommended to overcome drawbacks of black cotton soil.

The people practiced the new techniques of plantation and watershed management techniques with great enthusiasm. With the help of other agencies available locally, they constructed bunds, prepared percolation pits and large ponds for storage of water. As a result, they were able to have the second crop in some areas. The people are educated through the trainers and understood the importance and need of watershed development management. The authorities of SAME are convinced and have assured to implement the same for their survival. They have invited the team again for a follow up and one of the team members has decided to visit. Two persons from SAME have planned to visit the institution to learn the techniques of watershed management, gobar gas and agricultural practices.

As a part of this program students of various disciplines are being trained in watershed management by introducing an Honor's program carrying two credits.

***Resources
required***

1. Financial resources towards creating awareness, training, transport and materials.
2. Human resources in the form of experts, participants, beneficiaries and students.

3. Natural resources like land, saplings, water resources like springs, wells, ponds, bore wells and rain water.
4. Physical resources required are equipments, implements and place.

*Contact person
for further details*

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2.15	Wildlife Conservation and Protection
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The context

Snake, common inhabitant of human settlements, is the most feared reptile due to its fatal bite. It forms an important component of biota, the most important group of predators. The interaction between snakes and other animals maintains the natural balance. It is true that every year, many deaths occur due to accidental snakebites, especially in rural and tribal areas in the country. At the same time, it is also true that only very feeble attempt has been made in creating awareness about snakes. An educational institution can play a key role in this context. The success of the college in this regard during the last 10 years is its testimony. It is a fact that about 90% snake species occurring in human settlements are non-venomous, but due to lack of knowledge, proper identification of snakes, and inadequate medical treatment facilities in that area, people suffer and most of the times, the deaths are due to superstitions about snakes and non-scientific treatment procedures. It is possible for any educational institution to play a key role in educating community and solving such problems. The scientific knowledge can be provided to the rural youth through training programs. The rural youth can be engaged to rescue snakes in their areas, to give proper information about the snakes in the area, and to help community for proper medical treatment in fatal snake bite cases. For this, the help of medical practitioners and forest department can be taken. Medical practitioners could be encouraged for medical treatment of snake bite patients. Considering all these facts, in the college, the program was run to engage the community (teachers, students, medical practitioners and villagers). The college conducted training program in conservation and protection of snakes.

Objectives of the practice

- To conduct broad survey of snake species in area (Sangamner and Akole (Tribal) tahasils of Ahmednagar District);

- To prepare teaching aids like Video Clips, Slides, Charts; and
- To arrange training programs for
 - college students* - to identify, to handle, and to rescue snakes in the area (students belonging to rural and tribal areas are given preference);
 - medical practitioners* - identification of snakes and snake bite treatment procedures;
 - teachers* (primary, secondary, higher secondary teachers) - to arrange lectures with respect to importance, role of snakes in nature, identification of snakes, superstitions about snakes, and role of teachers in community education with respect to wild life conservation; and
 - community at large*-to arrange lectures with demonstrations for villagers and tribals to identify snakes, to eradicate superstitions about snakes, and to popularize conventional methods in snake bite treatment.

The practice

Survey - A broad survey of snakes was conducted by frequent visits in study area (villages, forest areas of Sangamner and Akole Tahasil). Different types of snake species were collected, reared and properly identified, and classified as common, rare and endangered species, and also as non-venomous and venomous snakes. In Sangamner and Akole Tahasil, 25 snake species were identified (19 non-venomous and 6 venomous). Slides, video clippings, photographs and colored charts were prepared showing all types of snakes, symptoms of poisonous snakes, primary treatment in snake bites, superstitions about snakes.

Training-

- A) *Student's training* – 54 students (40 boys and 14 girls) belonging to rural and tribal areas were selected through interview.
- A six day full-time training was given to all the participants. In this program identification, the habit, and behavior of snakes were emphasized. The skills like handling , catching

, rescuing of snakes were taught using live snake specimen.

- The lectures of medical practitioners were arranged with respect to poisonous snake bite treatment procedures, care to be taken, limitations, medicines used in snake bite treatment etc..
- The lectures of forest department authorities were arranged with respect to Wild Life Conservation and Protection Act and the role of community in conservation and protection.

B) Training of Medical Practitioners and Teachers –

- Lectures on snakes were delivered in the meets of above communities. For this, the help of Taluka Medical Associations and Education officers of Panchayat Samitees was taken.

C) Interaction with community at large–

- Taking the help of trained college students, Sarpanch, N.G.O.s more than 100 lectures and demonstrations were arranged in the villages and hamlets (Wadis).
- The colored charts (a set of 7) were supplied to hospitals where snake bite treatment is available.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Initial apprehension on the part of all involved in dealing with snakes was an obstacle to some extent, but was soon overcome when they realized the facts about snakes.

Impact of the practice

Through this program, conducted by college playing a key role, the following achievements were made–

- In study area, broad survey of snakes was conducted which helped in the study of biodiversity.
- The awareness among participants was created by giving thorough training related to protection and conservation of snakes. The skills developed helped the students to rescue the snakes and to save them.

- The superstitions about snakes were eradicated from all sections of community engaged in this program.
- The medical practitioners got the idea of proper treatments in fatal snake bite cases. Private medical practitioners can treat such fatal cases which was not possible before because of ignorance and inadequate medical facilities. The mortality rate in the study area is reduced.
- The villagers and tribals are able to identify snakes. Education in this regard helped them to save the life of snakes and human beings also.
- The private medical practitioners have shown their keen interest in this program.

Hence, in snake bite cases, more facilities are available for people. There are 8 private hospitals in Sangamner where snake bite treatment facilities are now available. This is the great achievement. The assistance is provided by the college to the medical practitioners with respect to the identification of snakes.

- The model teaching and learning package is ready and can be given to other higher educational institutions.
- The most important achievement of this program is that teachers, students, medical practitioners and community at large are aware of importance of conservation and protection of wild life. This may not have been possible by including in conventional curriculum.

*Resources
required*

- 1) Teachers - Teachers of any faculty can act as resource persons by taking a short-term training.
- 2) Medical practitioners - Registered medical practitioners from the area.
- 3) Resource persons from Forest department. (The program is continuous and well-documented. The financial assistance was made available by S.P. Sansta, Sangamner).

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3. Conclusion

The practices included in the book prove the fact that great benefits result for both, the community and the HEI, when they do things together. Purposive engagement can bring about lasting transformational effects for both the community and the institution. While the gain for community is in terms of social and economic well-being, it is in terms of knowledge, standing and stature for the institution.

The practices listed encompass a range of themes. Some are centered on student personality development; some on student-society interface for effective learning, while some deal with environmental concerns. Most, however, deal with social development. This, however, does not mean that the responses are rigidly classifiable. Very naturally, there is a degree of overlap among them, for a practice contributing to student personality development or effective learning is also contributing to social development, even if not very directly. The themes are cited just to propel the reader's thinking towards the specific objective in the case in point. The goal, as stated earlier, is to sensitize the higher education sector in the hope that the interested fellow-institutions may customize these best practices to their individual contexts and benefit themselves and the community around.

The first best practice case in the book, 'Vivekananda Sammelan', typifies the long-range effects on the community a sustained institutional effort can have over time. Implementation of this practice is the best homage a people can pay the great Indian saint. The next, 'Social Labs: Anganawadis as Community Resource Centers' is about ways to cultivate greater social sensitivity among students, so much in need these days, while at the same time trying to remove the stigma associated with Anganawadis as learning venues for children of the poor. Lack of or low-level of awareness on health issues generally and terminal diseases particularly is assuming worrisome proportions in the society. One reason for this might be absence of purposeful effort from the 'concerned' agencies. The 'Cancer Awareness Campaigns' organized by the Maharashtra college are a key step in controlling the spread of preventable cancer. Tribals and forests are partners in harmonious living. The practice on 'model for tribal village development' is illustrative of commitment by an HEI to simultaneously attain the twin objectives of tribal development and forest conservation. In 'Learn with Me', the focus is on efforts of an institution in

north-eastern India aimed at making a difference to the lives of poor and illiterate women through continual adult literacy activities.

The case, 'Rehabilitation of women prisoners' throws light on the hapless plight of women prisoners and the manner in which an institution can make their pain and suffering less or easier to bear. Faced with the hazards of modern-day living, need of the people for safe blood is an ever-expanding one. Blood donation, in addition to generating a feel-good factor for the donor and fostering a spirit of volunteerism, is also a route to service-learning. Spread of this practice can go a long way in meeting one of the important needs of the people. It is common knowledge that in today's society, the emotional bond between the elders and youngsters in families seem weakening. There may be many reasons for this happening. Care and compassion towards the senior citizens are not just desirable behavioral traits but cherished Indian cultural values that need to be preserved. The practice 'Caring for Senior Citizens' emphasizes this aspect. The lower strata of society have neither awareness nor access to insurance. Trained students can render effective service to these underprivileged sections through enlightening them on the need and scope for insurance. An institution in Andhra Pradesh has shown the way. With spread of literacy as the key objective, the practice 'Total Literacy Drive' identifies ways to prevent and reverse the widely prevalent drop-out phenomenon in the backward areas.

The experience of the institution from Gujarat characterizes the approach to transform tribal life through use of its own infrastructure and learning resources. An institution from Madhya Pradesh delivers the message that unless cared for, the marginalized tend to remain marginalized. Simple charms of life need not be missed even when resources are scarce. With low-cost nutrition, hygiene awareness and relaxation techniques, this becomes possible, confirms the experience of the institution. 'Study of Arsenic contamination in groundwater' in some districts of Bihar is a research-led practice. The case is described in detail in order to sensitize the people to the risks of water-contamination. This practice has proved a life-saver in the interior areas of rural Bihar. It is often said that future wars will be water wars. Nations will vie with one another for this precious natural resource. An institution in Karnataka evaluates the risks of existing and impending water shortages and underlines the urgency to practice rainwater harvesting and watershed management as the methods to ease the situation. The practice of the

institution has met with international acceptance. Eco-balance in nature is very delicate. Snakes, most feared for their fatal bites, are not as dangerous as commonly supposed, if properly 'handled'. Many times, even doctors seem not equipped with necessary information on treating snake bites. The institution has done extensive study on snakes and suggests that wildlife conservation and protection from snakes need not be contradictory.

The cases described make it obvious that a lot of good can come about through community engagement by an HEI. But, the HEIs need to recognize that only adhoc outcomes can result from non-committal or 'loose' partnerships. Ritual participation would not do. Whole-hearted commitment is necessary. Also, positive community pressures would be essential to persuade higher education institutions to work out a more comprehensive strategic approach to community engagement activities.

Appendix 1

Format to Compile Best Practices in Community Engagement

Practice	Describe title of the best practice in nutshell
Goal of the practice:	Goal and objective aimed to achieve by implementing the practice have to be mentioned.
The process:	Methodology of the practice with steps involved in implementing the practice.
Impact of the practice:	Benefit or outcome of the practice have to be recorded.
Resources required:	Please mention the resources like manpower, materials and money required.
For further details/contact person:	Name Designation Name of the College/University Address-City, Pincode Telephone Fax E-mail Website

Appendix 2

Participants in the Meeting on Best Practices in Community Engagement held on April 17, 2006

Sl. No.	Name and Address	Sl. No.	Name and Address
1.	Dr. (Ms). G. Pankajam (Education) (Former Vice – Chancellor Gandhigram Rural Institute Deemed University) Jnana Nilayam Nehru Nagar Gandhigram PO–624 302 Tamil Nadu	5.	Prof. R. R. Singh (Social Work) (Former Director TISS, Mumbai) Flat No. 2, Plot 5 Uttaranchal Cooperative Group Housing Society, Mother Dairy Road Patparganj Delhi - 110 092
2.	Prof. Shakuntala Katre (Zoology) Former Registrar (Evaluation) Bangalore University Jnana Bharathi Bangalore – 560 056	6.	Dr. Vandana Chakrabarti (Education) Director Dept. of Continuing & Adult Education & Extension SNDT Women’s University Mumbai – 400 020 Maharashtra
3.	Prof. G. Haragopal (Public Administration) Dean, School of Social Sciences University of Hyderabad Hyderabad - 500 046 Andhra Pradesh	7.	Prof. Anne Mary Fernandez (Economics) Registrar, University of Madras Chepauk Chennai - 600 005 Tamil Nadu
4.	Prof. A. C. Bhagabati (Anthropology) (Former Vice-Chancellor Arunachal University) National Highway No. 37 (Bypass) Guwahati – 781 014 Assam	8.	Prof. Veena R. Mistry (Human Development) (Former Pro Vice Chancellor M. S. University of Baroda) B/5, C. S. Patel Enclave 3, Pratap Ganj Vadodara – 390 002 Gujarat

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6. *Dr. K. Rama, Deputy Advisor, NAAC*
7. *Dr. Jagannath Patil, Deputy Advisor, NAAC*
8. *Mr. B. S. Ponmudi Raj, Assistant Advisor, NAAC*
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10. *Dr. Sujatha Shanbagh, Assistant Advisor, NAAC*
11. *Dr.K. N. Madhusudanan Pillai, Academic Consultant, NAAC*
12. *Mr. B. R. Manjunath, Academic Consultant, NAAC and*
13. *Mr. Wahidul Hasan, Communications and Publications Officer, NAAC*