

TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: RURAL CAMPUS

The idea of setting up a Rural Campus of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) was conceived on the occasion of the golden jubilee celebrations of TISS in 1986. It was felt that there was a need to consolidate the work done in the area of rural development and to develop a full-fledged academic and extension program in this area. The Rural Campus was conceptualized and founded on the belief that the rural economy and society could be revived through local resource mobilization, social and economic development at the village level, and by promoting efforts for self-help.

In support of this thrust area, the government of Maharashtra donated 100 acres of barren land in 1988 to TISS on which the Rural Campus has been set up (the land has since then been partly afforested). The Rural Campus is located in Tuljapur taluka, Osmanabad district, in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Its location in a semi-arid region that is underdeveloped in ecological, economic and social developmental terms, gives it and its programs a distinctive character. The location has been specifically chosen so as to evolve teaching/training, demonstration and diffusion of appropriate technologies, research and extension programs to primarily meet the needs of such regions.

A team of social workers was posted at the Rural Campus in 1988 and since then the Rural Campus has built up a good rural practice and training base that has been established through the Eighth and Ninth Five Year Plan periods with financial support of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT). In the first phase of construction, the Rural Campus was supported by SDTT with a grant of Rs 12.50 million in 1995. [Collectively, grants amounting to approximately Rs 133 million have been sanctioned from SDTT and its Allied Trusts, including a grant of Rs 120 million from the Tata Social Welfare Trust for Phase II of the construction of the Rural Campus.]

Being an integral part of TISS, the Rural Campus has a great legacy to back it up and live up to. The Rural Campus has now established its credibility in the Marathwada region through the innovative social development work done by its social workers over the last 15 years or so in the fields of land and water management, watershed



View of the Rural Campus

development, rural health, sanitation, hygiene, education, local self-governance, savings, credit and micro-enterprise and disaster management.

Currently a Bachelor's degree in Social Work (BASW) with a focus on rural development is being offered at the Campus. The majority of the students are from rural areas and receive scholarships from the state governments, the Tata Trusts and other donors. To facilitate the participation of the students from different rural areas a trilingual medium of instruction is used.

Field action programs initiated in 14 villages of Osmanabad district form the backbone of the Rural Campus as they provide hands-on experience to the faculty, social workers and the students. This also forms the basis for both understanding the current issues in rural development as well as a field for the learning of various approaches and methods of rural development interventions.

At present a two-pronged approach is being tried in these villages. Firstly to promote people's involvement in managing resources and development and secondly to work towards local self-governance, the participation of the marginalized in the gram panchayats and the strengthening of the gram sabha.

The programs of the Campus aim to transmit and operationalize the principles underlying the Constitution of India, the Human Rights Charter and the Social Work Code of Ethics. These values are promoted primarily through reflective practice in concrete field situations. Complementary to this process of value education is the process of critically drawing on the social sciences and the history of social practice for social transformation, both within the profession and beyond, and drawing on the rich folk traditions of the people.