

Unlocking the Impact of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Realizing the Opportunity

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Abstract

In 2015, the United Nations released the final text of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The transition from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to SDGs offer the civil society, NGOs, government and development organisations both-lucrative opportunity and challenge to strengthen as facilitators of development and address the root cause of poverty. NGOs in the past decade have assumed a center stage in realizing the educational rights of vulnerable and less-privileged groups like the tribals. It is in this context, this paper analyses the impact of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)-an NGO based in eastern region of India that caters to the basic needs of tribal children, with education as a potential tool in achieving various SDGs. The present paper is a case study which analyses how KISS plays its role in addressing SDG#1 and SDG#4 i.e. Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong and learning opportunities for all. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of SDGs and the role for NGOs in helping strengthen this transition from MDGs. The second part deals with the evolution of KISS. Third part of the paper throws light on various mechanisms and tools used by this institution in providing vocational education, free food, accommodation, health care and all other basic necessities to tribal children completely free of cost under single roof. The fourth part of the paper shows as to how the NGO (KISS) has brought new thinking to overcome the challenge of ending extreme poverty by providing holistic education through imparting livelihood learning skills and responding to various SDGs. The final thoughts draw upon as to how NGOs can link education with productivity, economic development and individual prosperity and how innovation in education can impart holistic education to the tribals.

Keywords: Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Tribals, Sustainable Development Goals, Odisha

Introduction

The Economic Survey of India 2015-2016, a flagship annual document of the Ministry of Finance, Government of India states that the economic performance of a country increases the Gross Domestic Product and per capita income and encompasses enhancement of opportunities and improvement in social infrastructure such as education, health, housing and housing amenities; levels of employment and employability of the nationals, proportion and number of poor; which is reflected by individual indices such as enrolment and literacy ratios, mortality rates, spread of immunization, control of major diseases; access to safe drinking water and toilets and captured by an aggregate human development index, which needs to be calculated annually state-wise. The document also lays emphasis that all this economic development has to be in an inclusive manner covering the deprived/marginal sections including women and all children.¹ Infrastructure can be divided into two categories-*economic and social*. Infrastructure associated with energy, transportation and communication are included in the former category whereas those related to education, health and housing are included in the latter.

The social infrastructure plays a critical role in the economic development of a nation. Education and health are such tools that have a positive impact on the overall growth of the economy. The Government of India has realised that investment in human capital by way of education, skill development, training and provision of health care facilities enhances the productivity of workforce and overall welfare of the population. Keeping

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this vision in mind, NGOs in India have also endeavored to build an inclusive society by providing education to the underprivileged, vulnerable and marginalized section of society such as the Scheduled caste (SCs), Scheduled tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

KISS is one such NGO situated in the eastern part of India that caters to the basic needs including imparting education to the indigenous/tribal community from the deepest forests of Odisha addressing the SDGs in a unique and holistic fashion. The role of NGOs in attaining SDGs is quite crucial given that the year 2015 marks transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the much broader 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and also because of the ambitious nature of SDGs. This paradigm shift to SDGs represents a steep change in ambition where the objective is not merely to reduce poverty in all its dimensions but to also eradicate it within 15 years. Thus, the situation demands a collective action from all sections of society including the government, individuals and NGOs. In the opinion of the authors, SDGs offer a transformatory challenge to the NGOs and it is in this context that KISS has continued to innovate to keep up with the pace of development in society. The new agenda builds on the MDGs, which KISS has been implementing since its inception in 1993. Realising the opportunity, which these goals offer, the NGO (KISS)

founded by Dr. Achyuta Samanta has strengthened the facilitators of development and addressed the root cause of poverty. i.e. lack of educational facilities.

There are seventeen (17) goals and one hundred and sixty nine (169) targets to be achieved under Sustainable Development Goals. However all these goals and targets cannot be said to be commonly significant in all the countries across the world. The reason being is that needs of countries differ as per the circumstances. In case of India, poverty and inequality in education is still an issue that needs to be significantly addressed. The role of NGOs like KISS become pertinent here in filling this gap by using SDGs as a vision document in fulfilling the requirements of shared prosperity and to act as a global citizen. As per UN document² the SDGs reflect two fundamental changes:

- They represent an acceptance of collective responsibility for fulfillment of social and economic rights among the world population by the global community as a whole;
- They specify exact parameters for what constitutes fulfillment of economic and social rights, and a date (2030) by which this should be done.

Population below poverty line	Rural poverty	Urban poverty	Total poverty
Less than 10	Goa, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Sikkim	Goa, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Mizoram, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tripura	Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh
10 to 20	Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, J&K, Nagaland, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand	Gujarat, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Karnataka, Nagaland, Odisha	J&K, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Tripura, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Nagaland, West Bengal
20 to 30	Gujarat, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh	Mizoram, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh
30 to 40	Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Mizoram,	Bihar, Manipur	Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh
Above 40	Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh		

Source- (National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, India estimates, 2011-2012)

Under the MDGs, global poverty has been halved mainly by accelerating poverty reduction programs in the more successful developing countries, where the potential is greatest, but with limited progress elsewhere.³ This can further be eradicated from the world if this challenge is adequately addressed everywhere. This can be achieved if there is a strong focus on those countries where poverty reduction is difficult. In case of India, the poverty reduction statistics have not been quite encouraging, as the rural poverty ratio still remains much higher than the urban. As per the Government of India estimates, this rural poverty can be attributed to lower farm incomes due to subsistence agriculture, lack of sustainable livelihoods in rural areas, impact of rise in prices of food products on rural incomes, lack of skills, underemployment and

unemployment.⁴ The Table below gives a picture of state-level rural and urban poverty in India:⁵ The total poverty ratio in Odisha is quite high falling between the ranges of 30 to 40.

Further, the Human Development Report (HDR) 2015, ranks India 130 out of 188 countries. The Human Development Index (HDI) is based on the indices for life expectancy, educational attainment and per capita income. As it is an alternative indicator of socio-economic development of the country, India's HDI value for 2014 is 0.609. But in comparison to other BRICS grouping, India has the lowest rank. See the table below, which shows the position of India in the Global HDI as per 2014 estimates:⁶

Country	HDI		Change in rank	GNI per capita	LEB (years)	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	Income Inequality		Gender Inequality	
	2014	Rank		(\$)		2014 ^a	2014 ^a	Quintile Income Ratio	Income Gini- Coefficient	Index 2014	Rank
								2005-13			
Norway	0.944	1	0	64992	81.6	17.5	12.6	4.0	26.8	0.067	9
Germany	0.916	6	3	43919	80.9	16.5	13.1	4.7	30.6	0.041	3
USA	0.915	8	-3	52947	79.1	16.5	12.9	9.8	41.1	0.280	55
U K	0.907	14	-2	39267	80.7	16.2	13.1	7.6	38.0	0.177	39
Russian Fed.	0.798	50	8	22352	70.1	14.7	12.0	7.3	39.7	0.276	54
Malaysia	0.779	62	1	22762	74.7	12.7	10.0	11.3	46.2	0.209	42
Sri Lanka	0.757	73	5	9779	74.9	13.7	10.8	5.8	36.4	0.370	72
Brazil	0.755	75	3	15175	74.5	15.2	7.7	16.9	52.7	0.457	97
China	0.727	90	13	12547	75.8	13.1	7.5	10.1	37.0	0.191	40
Egypt	0.690	108	-3	10512	71.1	13.5	6.6	4.4	30.8	0.573	131
Indonesia	0.684	110	3	9788	68.9	13.0	7.6	5.7	38.1	0.494	110
South Africa	0.666	116	4	12122	57.4	13.6	9.9	28.5	65.0	0.407	83
India	0.609	130	6	5497	68.0	11.7	5.4	5.0	33.6	0.563	130
Bangladesh	0.570	142	0	3191	71.6	10.0	5.1	4.7	32.1	0.503	111
Pakistan	0.538	147	0	4866	66.2	7.8	4.7	4.1	29.6	0.536	121
World	0.711			14301	71.5	12.2	7.9			0.449	

Source- (UN Human Development Report 2015)

The present paper is a humble attempt by the authors to understand and measure the performance of KISS as an NGO in reducing extreme poverty and how well it is equipped to address the challenges and its potential role as a civil society in absolute attainment of SDGs. In doing so, the authors have structured the paper by first throwing light on the social infrastructure of India using both facts and statistics in the introduction to this paper and thereafter discussing the role of NGOs in bridging this gap by implementing the SDGs. The paper progresses

to discuss the evolution of K.I.S.S. as an NGO and its role in reducing extreme poverty till date. In the third part, we have discussed the mechanisms adopted by KISS in addressing the SDGs. Moving on from here; we discuss the challenges that we face everyday and the approach adopted by the NGO in overcoming these challenges. The final thoughts to the paper conclude with a visionary approach highlighting the way forward and some recommendations.

Evolution of KISS and Its Role in Reducing Extreme Poverty

Though poverty is a problem of international concern, its definition has been contested over the years, as there is no international consensus on guidelines for measuring poverty. As per UNESCO's definition, it can either be relative or absolute. Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. It is not concerned with the broader quality of life issues. Relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given social context.⁷ As the concept of absolute poverty is not concerned with broader quality of life issues and fails to recognize that individuals have important social and cultural needs, we have relied on the definition of relative poverty. There are many factors, which are associated with poverty:

- Income and assets;
- Accessibility to basic education;
- Health care;
- Drinking water and sanitation

The indigenous/tribal communities of Odisha live in the dense forests of this region that has no connectivity with the outer world. They are completely deprived of the prevailing standards of living as compared to the urban or rural poor. Realizing that education can be a potential tool in eradication of this perpetual poverty, KISS has played an important role in the state of Odisha in addressing the causes of poverty. The genesis of this institute can be traced to the year 1993 when it was started with just 125 tribal students and has grown today into the largest free residential institute for indigenous children. It provides holistic education from kindergarten to the post-graduate level, vocational training, food, accommodation, health care and all other basic necessities of life to 27,000 indigenous (tribal) children from the most under-privileged background completely free of cost. The founder of this NGO, Achyuta Samanta has nurtured a vision of a world free from hunger, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance as he himself had a very difficult childhood. This experience motivated him to identify and realise the root causes of poverty, which encouraged him to work for the upliftment

of poor. In order to actualize his vision, he took to extensive travel and lived with alienated *Juang* tribal community in Keonjhar district, *Bhumija* and *Kolhas* of Mayurbhaj district so that he could closely understand the nature of problems these tribes go through in their daily lives. This experience has also helped him in understanding the way governmental organization and NGOs are extending help to these marginalized communities of Odisha. Using these experiences he modeled them in the form of an NGO i.e. KISS.

One of the key findings of this practical experience was that he could witness lack of education as the major reason for the backwardness of these tribes. This was despite the efforts being put in by the State government and other different NGOs working in this region. It is relevant to note here that the tribals have a very different and distinct way of living. They intend to protect their cultural heritage and usually shy away from change. They are dependents of forest-produce and their livelihood has also been on stake in recent times given the rate of tree felling in the garb of rapid industrialization. Further, they also do not know the various means of livelihood earning skills of the mainstream population. The schemes run by the government failed to give them continuous support and means of living.

In order to address these difficulties, Achyuta Samanta with only 100 dollars started a training institute called Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in 1992 in Odisha along with another institute called KISS dedicated especially for the basic education of tribal children starting with 125 children. *The catch here is the establishment of KIIT.* His mind had the vision of sustaining KISS in the long term, which is why he thought of a financial model that could ensure continuous supply of resources to the NGO, so that it does not have to rely on sporadic donations. This anchored as a facilitating agent in bringing up KISS with a sustainable financing and technically enabling model. KISS currently has a student strength of 27,000 students, which include 12,200 girls. KISS as a result has managed to bring about the much needed social change in the tribal hinterland of the state of Odisha and has reformed the lives and minds of tribals who have been living in *Maoist* and *Naxalite* insurgent areas. The graph below shows the growth in the number of children in terms of enrolment at KISS.⁸

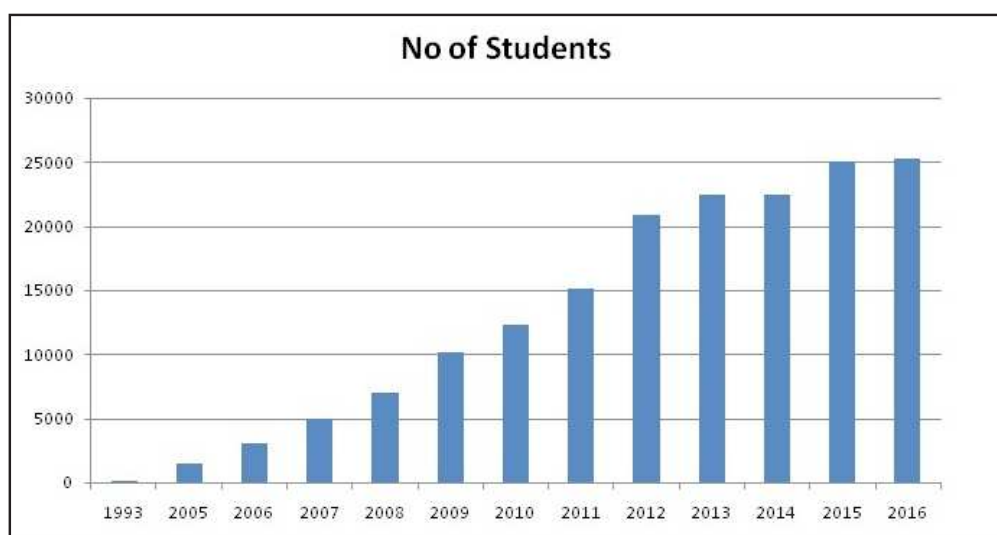


Fig. 1: Mechanisms Adopted by KISS in Addressing the SDGs

The Prime Minister of India, recently remarked at the UN Summit for the adoption of Post-Development Agenda, *“Just as our vision behind the Agenda 2030 is lofty, our goals are comprehensive. It gives priority to the problems that have endured through the past decades. And, it reflects our evolving understanding of the social, economic and environmental linkages that define our lives. I am pleased that elimination of poverty in all forms everywhere is at the top of our goals. Addressing the needs of 1.3 billion poor people in the world is not merely a question of their survival and dignity or our moral responsibility. It is a vital necessity for ensuring peaceful, sustainable and just world.”*⁹

Also the UNDP Administrator Helen Clark has noted: *“The SDG 2030 agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens’ aspirations for peace, prosperity and well being and to preserve our planet.”*¹⁰

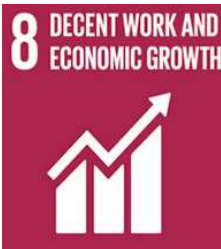
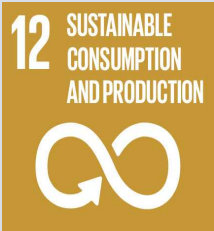
The SDGs have been designed comprehensively to advance sustainable development through greater integration of its three pillars: economic, social and environmental.¹¹ The above remarks by two eminent figures send a signal that there should be a convergence of SDGs and MDGs beyond 2015 and the role of NGOs will be very important for the success of such goals. Thus, it is

both-advisable and also one of the reasons why the NITI Aayog (erstwhile Planning Commission of India) has mainstreamed the civil society into the planning process. KISS has so far acted as an agent of change and building block in reforming the future of the indigenous community of Odisha. We have elaborated in the introduction to this paper, the reasons behind transition from MDGs to SDGs. The MDG’s drove progress in several important areas: (a) income poverty (b) access to improved water resources (c) primary school enrolment (d) child mortality.

KISS since its inception has been successfully responding to the MDGs by trying to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, empower women and ensure environmental sustainability. Apart from these four relevant goals, KISS through its efforts has created awareness in reducing child mortality and combating malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases among the tribals which constitute 25% of the population of the State of Odisha and 8% of India.¹² Thus in its own way, KISS has so far managed in reaching out to the world through its global partnership with the goal for achieving development. There are various programmes and projects being implemented by KISS, which has been designed with the idea of attainment of SDGs. The table below relates the way KISS has been instrumental in realizing this opportunity.¹³

Table 1: Unlocking the Impact of SDGs: KISS as a Holistic Model Realizing the Goals

SDG No.	Name of SDG	Tools used by KISS/ Projects implemented	Role of K.I.S.S.
1	 No Poverty	Free education Largest residential school for the tribal children in the world	KISS has used 'free education' as the most potential tool in eradication of poverty by targeting the most marginalized sections of the state of Odisha, India
2	 Zero Hunger	Nutritious Food	Apart from free education, KISS takes holistic care of all the children by providing them with free food, boarding and lodging. The nutritious food provision also curbs starvation and malnutrition among the children. KISS children also get to eat milk and cornflakes for breakfast as goodwill gesture sponsored by Kellogg India.¹⁴
3	 Good Health and well-being	200 bedded in-house medical facility Free lodging, boarding, healthcare KISS-UNFPA Life Skills based Sexual & Reproductive Health education	KISS takes care of 27,000 children by also providing free medical facilities to all of them. KISS in partnership with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is undertaking Life Skills based Sexual & Reproductive Health education since 2009. The sanitary napkin unit has been further strengthened at KISS.
4	 Quality Education	Mother tongue based multilingual education for primary students English Access Micro-scholarship Program Science Park for children	KISS with the support of Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) provides training in language to children who face language problem due to their ethnicity. KISS through its English Micro-scholarship has been bridging the gap of quality English language proficiency for indigenous children. This program is a remarkable initiative of the U.S. Department of State. There is also a science park to encourage application-based learning.
5	 Gender Equality	Student representation from 62 tribes including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG)	KISS is recognized as institution for promoting girl child education by DASRA, Mumbai. KISS in partnership with British Council has launched the Young Women Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme, which is being implemented at KISS. This provides advanced social enterprise training to female master trainers who shall train aspiring female social entrepreneurs in India.
6	 Clean Water and Sanitation	Reverse Osmosis Drinking Water Plant Swacch Bharat Abhiyaan	KISS has its own water filtration plant, which purifies water through reverse osmosis process. Further, the students of KISS have taken to continuous cleanliness drive of keeping the city clean.

7	 Affordable and Clean energy	500 KW Solar Power plant Solar water heating system for mechanized kitchen	KISS has a rooftop Solar Power Plant which will supply solar power to the institute for the next 25 years. This has reduced dependence on grid power supply, generates green and clean power and mitigates GHG emissions.¹⁵
8	 Decent work and Economic Growth	Vocational Training	KISS provides dignity of labor through the concept of “<i>Earn while you Learn</i>”. It trains each of the students in some vocational skill or other. The profits earned from the sale of these products are given to students involved in making of the products. This lays the foundation of future employment/self employment of the student and their community.
10	 Reduced Inequalities	Employment opportunities	KISS through its unique model of education has empowered the youth and women to become entrepreneurs and bring them at par with the mainstream society thereby reducing overall inequality. Some of them have also been selected as Ashoka Youth Venture icons.
11	 Sustainable cities and communities	Smart village	KISS Founder Achyuta Samanta has built the only smart city model village of Odisha. The village has Wi-fi facilities and solar enabled lighting among other facilities. There has also been electrification of roads leading to smart village.
12	 Sustainable Consumption and Production	Biogas Plant to process food waste into biogas for use in cooking purposes	KISS has a biogas plant which helps in processing food waste into biogas. This is further used for cooking purposes, which in turn ensures reduction of waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and re-use.
13	 Climate Action	Plantation drive and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan	Under the Microsoft Inspire School Programme for the year 2014, topics ranging from E-waste, water, energy and pollution were thematically discussed. Students are apprised on environmental degradation and its protection, waste management through various activities. Students also take to plantation of trees occasionally and take part in cleanliness drive under the flagship scheme of Govt. of India to keep the cities clean.

17	 Partnership for the Goals	Partnerships with international bodies	KISS has been forging global partnerships for sustainable development of underprivileged. It has partnered with UN agencies like UNFPA, UNICEF Foundations and other embassies. It has also been conferred with UN Special Consultative status by ECOSOC. The Founder of KISS also delivers lectures on SDGs at various international forums including UNSCC, Bonn, Germany where KISS as an NGO has been incorporated in the module as a successful model of implementation of various SDGs.
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The paper below highlights the various interventions by KISS which has brought about successful change and impact at a large level amongst the tribal groups of the State of Odisha. Some of the positive interventions by KISS are as follows:

(a) Bridging the Language Gap: For some, language is a road to upward mobility and for some it is a barrier to even live a life of choice and dignity. KISS acts as a facilitator in bringing the PVTGs to the mainstream without disturbing their unique cultural roots. This can be a determinant of access to resources to alleviate poverty and hunger. Early socialization of children at KISS with the other senior students of the same tribe and endeavor of tribal teachers to bring cultural awareness and sensitivity to the classroom environment has helped the tribal students in excelling in both academics and sports. The pedagogy of multi-language teaching has helped in honing the overall personality of a tribal child.

(b) Breaking Intergenerational Poverty Chain: KISS has been instrumental in providing quality education along with vocational training (*'earn while you learn'*). This approach has been adopted in light of prevailing economic trends and market potential. The initiative has helped many tribal students to gain suitable employment or become entrepreneurs and remit some money back home to support their families who are still living in the dense forests of Odisha. It is also important to note that many students of KISS have joined civil services, government sector and have managed to secure white-collar jobs. This is one the successful examples of intervention by KISS.

(c) Reaping the Benefits of 'Holistic Education' and Defying Stereotypes: Some of the tools and mechanisms used by KISS to provide holistic education has defied many stereotypes, consequently leading to overall success and development of the child in both academic and non-academic sphere. For instance: Innovative learning

materials like using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools, Information, education and communication (IEC) materials for the indigenous tribal adolescent students, storytelling, interactive multimedia sessions, Life Skill Education (LSE), English access classes, coaching classes, cultural activities, vocational activities, yoga and sports have enhanced cultural awareness and brought them at ease/par while interacting with other members of the community at large.

(d) Arresting Drop-Out & Stopping Child Labour: The provision for free education, food, health facilities, vocational training, cultural activities rooted in their tradition and a playful environment including excellent sports infrastructure has all added to an interesting atmosphere of KISS helping arrest drop-outs and effectively have cent-percent retention rate. The direct consequence and also the spillover effects of these initiatives is that it has stopped child labour.

(e) Positive Behavioural Changes and Personality Development: The purpose of education at KISS is not only academic development rather it aims at bringing out the best version of the personality of tribal kids so that they also develop a sense of social responsibility. KISS takes initiatives and creates platform for these tribal kids, which help them in exploring life opportunities and developing competencies to contribute effectively in the socio-economic development of the country. Life Skills Education (LSE) and Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health (ARSH) have been integrated with the formal education at KISS which has helped in restricting the tribal children and youth from engaging in smoking, substance abuse, consumption of alcohol, unprotected sex etc.

(f) Promoting Gender Equality, Women Empowerment & Checking Child Marriage: KISS promotes gender equality and women empowerment. The tribal girls at

KISS are at equal footing with their male counterparts and have brought laurels in all spheres including academics, sports, etc. Many tribal girls of KISS have joined higher education in medicine, engineering, law etc. They have successfully headed the Under 18 Indian Rugby team, went on to become entrepreneurs and successful doctorates. Their association with KISS at early stage of life has also helped in checking child marriages in many tribal districts of Odisha.

(g) Improved Health Conditions: The widespread malnutrition, absence of safe drinking water and sanitary living conditions, poor maternal and child health-care services and ineffective coverage of national health and nutritional services are factors contributing to dismal health conditions prevailing amongst the tribal population of India. Serving regular and nutritious meals checks malnutrition at KISS. To overcome the aforementioned challenges and in order to cater to the health needs of tribal children, KISS has made necessary medical arrangements. This has curbed the health ailments of tribal students at KISS.

The tribal adolescent girls are the future mothers hence special care is also provided for their mental and physical health. Girls receive individual counseling for their health issues. There is a counseling room for girls that has been made user-friendly with the addition of posters and reading materials. The health counseling for girls in KISS dispensary has been strengthened with gynecologists, who counsel students on healthy and hygienic practices. In the long run it would also be very helpful in reducing the maternal mortality rate.

Immunization drive is also taken up by KISS for its students. The children are made aware about the ways to combat/prevent malaria and other diseases, which affect 25% of the population of Odisha. The modern know-how helps in dispelling superstitions amongst the tribals with regard to health and hygiene. With the support of United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA), KISS has been endeavouring to hone the abilities of its indigenous children through Life Skills Education (LSE) and Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health (ARSH) in order to enable them to deal with the demands and challenges of their lives effectively.

These interventions by KISS aims at building institutional capacity and networking with other potential institutions

to overcome knowledge and skill deficit in the state for the promotion of LSE. KISS is also implementing LSE & ARSH program in 30 districts of Odisha reaching 1 million children in the state.

(h) Mitigating Ill Effects of Voluntary/Involuntary Displacement of Tribal Communities: The voluntary and involuntary displacement of many tribal communities by developmental-projects/industries often results in impoverishment. In order to check their vulnerability due to displacement, KISS has enrolled children of the displaced families and the ones supposed to be displaced by various developmental-projects. Tribal youths from the project-affected areas are given vocational and industrial training so that they are absorbed in the industries coming up in their areas and thus reap the fruits of development.

(i) Celebrating Diversity: KISS is home to sixty two (62) tribes including thirteen (13) primitive tribes. Students from various tribes celebrate tribal festivals like Sakrat Parab, Maghe Parab, Chaita Parab etc. and other festivals like Jagannath Rath Yatra, Holi, Diwali, Raksha Bandhan, Basant Panchami etc. with traditional fervor thereby celebrating diversity. The tribal form of poems, art, craft and music has been a part of KISS through various manifestations. There has not been any case of diversity becoming a bottleneck for bonhomie among the students of different tribes. KISS always blossoms with new founded kinship and fraternity. They have contributed in making the campus a vibrant and disciplined one. Each sub-culture has enriched the campus. Diversity has been made a strength and KISS 'celebrates diversity'. All these initiatives, most importantly protects the cultural identity of tribal children.

(j) Preservation of Nature: Tribal life is intimately connected to the forests. For centuries the tribals have lived in or in the fringes of forests and have depended entirely on forests for their livelihood. KISS has been sensitizing the tribal students regarding the conservation and protection of forest in order to curb climate change. It makes the students aware by observing different red-letter days for the protection and preservation of the forest. In 'KISS-GREEN' drive, many children have adopted trees. The tree bears the name of the child and the child takes care of the tree with a great deal of love and care. The tribal children has established the bond faster because of their roots in the forested tribal land; hence, KISS has linked sylvan cultural roots with the saplings.

Conclusion & Way Forward

India has the largest tribal population in the world. The rate of literacy among the tribal population is less than 60% in India. The tribal population in the state of Odisha, where KISS is situated is approximately 23%. The condition of rural schools in India is not quite applaudable as the current schemes being run by the government lacks certain features and infrastructure, thus making the programs and policies less successful. The authors through practical experience of running the NGO-KISS has identified that tribal children possess the basic cognitive abilities and psychological dispositions for successful participation in schools. The poor performance of tribal students and the below average situation of primary education in tribal areas is driven by inter-related factors. One of the challenges we face is the participation of tribal children at the elementary school level, which is quite low. Further, the dropout rate at primary school level is 35.6% as against 27% of their non-tribal counterparts.¹⁶ Section III of this paper discusses the various mechanisms we have deployed in order to address these challenges.

It may also be relevant to briefly note the various internal issues which are intrinsic to the structure of the education system: Language of instruction becomes a barrier at times when children come from primitive tribes of India, the design of curriculum content, training of faculties to train the indigenous children, community participation and ownership and lack of proper monitoring and guidance has led to failure of implementation of best of plans. While we bring children to KISS, we also have to face certain external problems and issues like gender bias, which still exists amongst the villagers. As these villages are located deep inside the forests, access becomes a major issue. Further, attitude of the parents at times, convincing them to send their children does become a challenge that we address through counseling.

The solution to address these challenges requires a radical shift in the thinking process and to strengthen the infrastructure by building seasonal hostels, residential schools like KISS, mobile teachers and education training for the parents. There is a also need for sensitizing organizations with their institutional social responsibility and encourage community engagement of various educational institutions. This can make the process more participative and engaging.

KISS had envisioned transforming this institute into a Tribal University in the coming years, which would be the only university for tribals in the state and in the world providing free residential education. Pursuant to its commitment to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals, *it has been granted the status of a University with effect from August 25, 2017*. KISS aims to lay the foundation stone for building the edifice of tribal development. Over the next five years KISS has been planning to increase its outreach in the state by setting up KISS model schools in all the districts of Odisha, beginning with the districts with higher marginalized population. Further it aims to strengthen the district schools by building partnerships and collaborating with the government and non-government agencies.

The establishment of KISS has created an interest and a demand for education amongst the underprivileged tribal population. With each year passing by the number of students getting enrolled into the institution has been increasing. With the increasing demand for education amongst the tribals, it becomes a little difficult for KISS to accommodate all the students in the institute. KISS with its limited resources cannot meet the educational requirements of all the tribal students. Therefore, KISS plans to open schools in all the tribal dominated blocks of Odisha and other parts of India.

KISS has not only been aiming to establish schools but is also in the process of opening its branch offices, namely *KISS Satellite Centers*, in all the districts. So far 16 KISS Satellite Centers have started operations in various districts of Odisha. Through the satellite centers KISS will be organizing Health and Education camps in the districts. It would also take up different development initiatives in the districts through the centers. Apart from Odisha, KISS aspires to expand its reach throughout the country. The KISS model of education has already been replicated in the National Capital Region of Delhi.¹⁷

In light of the statistics advanced, it is quite evident that the education system is currently designed for the dominant group. The need of the hour is to create support mechanisms that supplement the integration of tribal children into the formal education system. It is recommended that both tribal and state/regional languages should be used during the pre-primary and primary levels. It is also necessary to create supplementary tribal relevant learning materials, which shall enhance the overall effectiveness

and efficiency. If incentives were given, both monetary and non-monetary in nature, to the teachers serving in tribal areas, it would encourage them to work harder and serve better. Along with the educational needs, it is also important to address the health and nutritional needs of tribal children and improve community participation by training tribal teachers and youth. These schemes and policies shall only be effective if the tribal children are brought into the mainstream and also by establishing transitional education centers can aid this process.

Mahatma Gandhi had once said: *“One must care about the world one will not see”*. The Prime Minister of India has also remarked: *“Indeed humanity has progressed when it has collectively risen to its obligation to the world and responsibility to the future.”* KISS has taken the complete and holistic responsibility of implementing the SDGs in this direction and is spearheading its implementation to achieve it in totality by 2030.

Notes

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