



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in Community Based  
Research and Social Responsibility  
in Higher Education



University  
of Victoria



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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

*A joint initiative of the UNESCO Chair in Community Based  
Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education Institutions  
and the British Council, India*

## *CLOSURE REPORT*

Submitted by  
Participatory Research  
in Asia (PRIA)

2013-2015

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

S. No.	Title	Details
1.	Introduction/ Background of the project	<p><i>Since the body of knowledge that exists on the subject of social responsibility and community engagement in higher education institutions in India is very limited, this study will play an important role in gathering the attitudes, priorities and perceptions of Higher Education Institutions in India. Despite India's economic growth, new forms of social exclusion, urban poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and violence have also emerged in the past decade. Ensuring inclusive development, democratic governance and sustainable growth requires new knowledge, enhanced human competencies and new institutional capabilities in the country. It was expected that education would contribute solutions to these problems to some extent. However, in spite of enhanced investment and expenditure, leading to increased enrolment, these issues remain largely unattended. The role of institutions of higher education in societal development seems to be the potential missing link.</i></p> <p><i>The 12th Plan aims to promote greater social responsibility in higher education in the country, as per the recommendations of the Steering Committee on Technical and Higher Education in the country<sup>1</sup>. While many institutions have already been involved in programs like the NSS, they are largely designed to 'help' the community. The new approach to community engagements being recommended by the expert committee set up by the Planning Commission emphasizes mutually beneficial and respectful partnerships between communities, civil society and institutions of higher education in the country. It is important, therefore, to more clearly and forcefully mandate that the core purposes of 'community engagement' by institutions of higher education is to serve mutually agreed interests of both communities and institutions. This implies that the partnership is based on give and take by both parties and is equally beneficial.</i></p> <p><i>Keeping this in mind, the UNESCO Chair embarked on the project on 'Strengthening Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions', with support from the British Council. Four states (Punjab, Bengal, Assam and Karnataka) were covered under the project. In each of the states, a ground level survey on community engagement practices in the academia was followed by a brainstorming workshop comprising of key stakeholders in the process.</i></p>
2.	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Systematisation and analysis of innovative practices of 'community engagement' in higher education institutions; identifying them and understanding its impact.</i></li> <li>• <i>Understanding the perception, attitude and priorities of higher education institutions in relation to their responsibility towards society.</i></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Tandon, R. (2014). Fostering Social Responsibility in Higher Education in India. Retrieved April 28, 2015 from UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education: [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Fostering\\_Social\\_Responsibility.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Fostering_Social_Responsibility.pdf)

3.	Target universities	<i>For this project, the target group was various universities spread across the states of Punjab, Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Karnataka. The universities covered are Panjab University, Patiala University, North Bengal University, Gauhati University, Cotton College State University, Indian Institute of Technology-Gauhati (IITG), Tezpur University, Jain University, Bangalore University, Christ University, Mysore University, Tumkur University.</i>
4.	Geographical spread	<i>Punjab, North Bengal, Assam, Karnataka</i>
5.	Methodology	<i>The research component under this project included mapping and surveying community engagement practices in the chosen universities and colleges. The results were analyzed and collated in the form of a reports<sup>2</sup> which clearly spells out the findings, along with explaining implications. The report became the basis for the follow-up workshop and was shared with relevant stakeholders. Brainstorming around the ground situation in the workshop helped suggestions for meaningful actions and advocacy in the future.</i>
6.	Key outputs/deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Survey Reports ,[See footnote 3, 4, 8, 9]</li> <li>• 6 Conference Reports , (4 for the state based workshops, 1 for the Delhi event and 1 of the National symposium)disseminated widely and uploaded on the UNESCO Chair Website. [ <a href="http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/">http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/</a> ][See footnotes 5,6, 10, 11, 7, 12]</li> <li>• Final project paper titled 'Community Engagement in HEIs: Status Report 2015.' [Available as attachment]</li> </ul>
7.	Impact	<p><b>Quantitative:</b>  <i>Covered about 12Universities and some of its constituent colleges</i></p> <p><b>Qualitative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping of community engagement activities through comprehensive surveys in the universities led to awareness generation on the issue.</li> <li>• The state dialogues which followed the survey served as an opportunity for leaders in higher education, academics, students, community leaders and civil society organisations to come on one platform.</li> <li>• Practical examples of direct support, along with ideas on fulfillment of the social responsibility of universities led to new knowledge generation.</li> <li>• Academia sensitised on the essence of community university engagement and the ways forward.</li> </ul> <p><i>Advocacy by the UNESCO Chair led to UGC launching the new scheme which provides for the establishment of the "Centre For Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement" in select eligible universities. This will open the gates for mainstreaming community engagement in the regular academic curriculum, by giving it due credit and relevance.</i></p> <p><i>The UNESCO Chair recently convened a consultation of interested universities</i></p>

<sup>2</sup> Available as attachments for which, corresponding web links are provided in the subsequent sections of the report.

		<i>in this regard, and has come forward with concrete points on how to move ahead.</i>  <i>The Chair has also offered support to interested universities in the proposal development process for establishing such Centre to be submitted to the UGC.</i>
8.	Year/Period	2013-2015
9.	Client, focal point & address	<b>Client:</b> British Council  <b>Focal Point:</b> Ms. Manjula Rao & Ms. Vishu Sharma  <b>Address:</b> British Council   17 Kasturba Gandhi Marg   New Delhi - 110 001/ India D: +91 11 4149 7272 T: +91 11 2371 1401 ext 272/ F: +91 11 2371 0717
10.	Project cost	Rs. 10 lakh

### PROJECT CONCEPT NOTE

Community-University Engagement has assumed profound importance amidst the challenges faced by the world today. Knowledge, per say, is a reservoir of information which has the potential of helping out in challenging situations to achieve sustainability in areas in which it is put to use. It is in this context that the debate and increased stress on community-university engagement has gained ground in international academic and non-academic circles. The traditional approach to community-university engagement adopted by universities focusses on a one-way flow of informal and moral discourse from the university to the community. This assigns to universities the role of guardian of all knowledge, and the community is viewed as passive receivers of this knowledge. Community-university engagement in the true sense of the word moves away from this approach, recognizing the importance and value of indigenous knowledge that resides in communities and its relevance in finding solutions to local problems. Universities are required to engage with communities in a meaningful two-way interaction. This not only facilitates the flow of information from the universities to the communities, but also paves way for incorporation of indigenous knowledge into traditional research in an attempt to produce knowledge which is socially relevant. In this co-production of knowledge, the communities are not treated as 'passive beneficiaries', but as equally 'active' in the research process. By adopting this perspective, universities have the potential to emerge as a more promising source of knowledge by producing 'socially relevant research'.

Since the body of knowledge that exists on the subject of social responsibility and community engagement in higher education institutions in India is very limited, the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, supported by the British Council, India, embarked on a project, 'Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions', to understand the attitudes, priorities and perceptions of higher education institutions in India towards community-university engagement. A survey was planned across the states of Punjab, Bengal, Assam and Karnataka. Research was conducted in collaboration with Panjab University, North Bengal University, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, and Jain University, Bangalore to

understand attitudes and opinions on the community engagement activities being carried out in various higher education institutions.

Generation of meaningful data involved the use of a structured questionnaire and field visits to the selected institutions. Interviews with concerned authorities in the selected institutions were to be conducted through personal visits.

A regional dialogue at the respective host universities would follow to discuss the survey findings and share practical examples of direct support. This dialogue would provide an opportunity for leaders of higher education, academics, students, community leaders and civil society organisations to come together on one platform and discuss active engagement and long-term contributions to the community by institutions of higher education from the region.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES, OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES**

The project 'Community Engagement in HEIs' envisaged a range of core activities and allied activities.

### **I. CORE TASKS**

Period	Activity	Output	Outcome
<b>QUARTER 1</b>			
December 2013 – February 2014	Preliminary survey and state level conferences in Punjab and North Bengal - travel of participants/resource persons, conference logistics and materials	Extensive surveys carried out in Punjab and North Bengal Universities in an attempt to map the current practices of community engagement in the respective universities. The surveys were completed with the help of out host universities, Panjab University (PU) & North Bengal University (NBU).  Separate survey reports for Punjab <sup>3</sup> and Bengal <sup>4</sup> were collated accordingly and uploaded on UNESCO Chair Website.  Following the survey phase, a dialogue was held	Awareness generation with the survey reports being disseminated within the host universities, and publicised across wider networks worldwide, and also via the UNESCO Chair website. Student participation in the conferences contributed to building their orientation towards the topic. They were seen as being quite enthusiastic about the issue and committed to work on this front.  A research paper emanating from the findings emerging from the survey was presented at the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Asia Engage Regional Conference, held in Bali, in November 2014. It was titled ' <i>Gauging the impact of community university</i>

<sup>3</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Punjab\\_Study\\_Note.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Punjab_Study_Note.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/North\\_Bengal\\_Study\\_Note.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/North_Bengal_Study_Note.pdf)

		<p>at both the universities in Chandigarh (March 6 &amp; 7, 2014) and Siliguri (March 3 &amp; 4, 2014) respectively, which saw extensive participation from academics, government representatives and civil society. Chief guests at the conferences included <i>Dr Michael Osborne</i>, Chair &amp; professor, Adult &amp; Lifelong Education, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom; <i>Dr Emma Mckenna</i>, Science Shop Coordinator, Queen's University, Belfast &amp; Work package leader on Public engagement with research and research engagement with society (PERARES) project and <i>Dr Jennifer Chambers</i>, Senior Policy Manager, Research Councils, United Kingdom. The dialogue resulted in awareness generation, sharing of experiences and ended with a commitment to take the initiative forward in the future.</p> <p>Separate conference report for Punjab<sup>5</sup> and Bengal<sup>6</sup> has been prepared and uploaded on the UNESCO Chair website.</p>	<i>engagement initiatives in India</i> '.
March 2014	Delhi conference, support to surveys, report preparation	The seminar on 'Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions' was held on March 5, 2014 at the Planning Commission in New Delhi. Attended by	The Delhi Conference provided a platform to network with universities within Delhi and 11 other universities across India, through video-conferencing mode.

<sup>5</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Write-Up\\_Punjab.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Write-Up_Punjab.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Write\\_Up\\_Bengal.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Write_Up_Bengal.pdf)

		<p>over 40 participants, the seminar also saw the release of the 5<sup>th</sup> GUNi World Report on on “Knowledge, Engagement &amp; Higher Education: Contributing to Social Change”, by <i>Shri Ashok Thakur</i>, Secretary, Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD). The report for the event has been uploaded on the UNESCO Chair website<sup>7</sup>.</p>	<p>Mutual sharing of practices and experiences on community engagement led to mutual learning, along with having an opportunity to interface with the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) &amp; University Grants Commission (UGC) on policy prescriptions and governmental support on the same. The deliberations resulted in some participating universities like Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra and Central University, Himachal Pradesh to come forward and actively associate with the Chair and partner in joint initiatives for promotion of community engagement.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUARTER 2</b></p>			
<p>April – June 2014</p>	<p>Follow-up data-collection and documentation of good practices in Punjab and North Bengal.</p> <p>Capacity enhancement of colleges and universities to promote community engagement in research and teaching functions</p>	<p>Under capacity enhancement efforts, <i>Dr Ronki Ram</i>, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Panjab University and <i>Dr Mohammad Yasin</i>, Professor, Department of Political Science &amp; Head, Department of Lifelong Learning &amp; Extension, North Bengal University were invited to the Guwahati Conference (held in Quarter 3) for sharing of experiences. In the conference, they got to learn about other community engagement practices elsewhere. They also shared the progress made at their respective universities in the realm of community university engagement. The UNESCO Chair has also offered</p>	<p>As a result of a close association with UNESCO Chair, <i>Dr Ronki Ram</i>, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Panjab University committed to continuing the work of mapping of CUE efforts in the rest of the colleges in Panjab University and as ICSSR director of north-western regional centre, pledged his continuous support to this cause.</p> <p>In light of the dialogue held, <i>Dr Mohammad Yasin</i>, Professor, Department of Political Science &amp; Head, Department of Lifelong Learning &amp; Extension, North Bengal University shared that NBU has chalked out a plan for engaging with the community, and sought approval from the regulatory bodies and the university authorities. This plan involves 4 components, viz,</p>

<sup>7</sup> <http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Delhiwrite-up.pdf>



		them support in the process of proposal development under the new UGC scheme on fostering community engagement.	certificate courses, training of trainers, organisation of self-help groups, and sensitisation/awareness programs for women, children, with respect to health, nutrition, etc. Considering the valued work being done by the Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension (NBU), the University authorities have given it an additional responsibility of coming up with an action plan in relation to disaster management.
<b>QUARTER 3</b>			
May 2014 – February 2015	Conducting surveys in Assam and Karnataka to generate state level database and documentation of good practices (technical support, resource persons, travel, field work, analysis and reports)	Extensive surveys undertaken and completed in Assam and Karnataka, with the help of host institutions, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati & Jain University, Bangalore.  The respective survey reports for Assam <sup>8</sup> and Karnataka <sup>9</sup> have been prepared and uploaded on the UNESCO Chair website.	Awareness generation with the survey reports being disseminated within the host universities, and publicized across wider networks worldwide, and also via the UNESCO Chair website.  The findings of the study and the conference report of Guwahati, Assam was shared with the Director, IIT-G. <i>Dr Pahi Saikia</i> , Assistant Professor, IIT-G reiterated her commitment to take the agenda forward in the future. Similarly, <i>Dr Sandeep Shastri</i> , Pro Vice-chancellor, Jain University, with support from Karnataka Higher Education department reaffirmed his commitment to take the study further into other parts of the state, and keep working on the agenda in the future.
<b>QUARTER 4</b>			
September	State level	Similar to Punjab &	State based dialogues at

<sup>8</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Assam\\_Study%20Note.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Assam_Study%20Note.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Karnataka\\_Compiled\\_report\\_10March.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Karnataka_Compiled_report_10March.pdf)

2014 & March 2015	conferences in Assam and Karnataka*	<p>Bengal, state based dialogues were held at Guwahati, Assam (September 17 &amp; 18, 2014) &amp; Bangalore, Karnataka (March 18 &amp; 19, 2015). The dialogue witnesses enthusiastic participation from the local &amp; national level stakeholders.</p> <p>Comprehensive reports on the events held in Guwahati<sup>10</sup> and Bangalore<sup>11</sup> been prepared and uploaded on the UNESCO Chair website</p>	<p>Guwahati and Bangalore attracted considerable attention. The Guwahati workshop witnessed the participation of North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) from the neighbouring state of Meghalaya who expressed their interest in the field of community engagement. This led to further dissemination of the idea among the hill state universities, where much potential was observed, considering the key role played by ethnic communities in the society.</p> <p>The dialogue at Bangalore enjoyed full support and cooperation from the state higher education department and intellectuals/academics alike. The enthusiasm and energy that the workshop generated shows good promise for the future.</p> <p>Vibrant student participation at both the events showcased the interest the student community harbored on this issue. Pertinent questions and critical issues raised by them also played a great role in orienting the thought of process of the academics as well, regarding community engagement.</p>
<b>QUARTER 5</b>			
April 2015	Policy dialogue with Planning Commission, Ministry of Human Resources Development, University Grants Commission and	A symposium on 'Mainstreaming Community University Research Partnerships' was held in New Delhi on April 9, 2015. The event had nearly 45	The symposium brought together a network of academics, governmental representatives and civil society to draft action points for the promotion of community engagement in the future.

<sup>10</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/IITG\\_Conf\\_2014\\_Detailed\\_Report.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/IITG_Conf_2014_Detailed_Report.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Bangalore\\_Conference\\_Report.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Bangalore_Conference_Report.pdf)

	<p>others in Delhi with experiences from Punjab, North Bengal, Assam and Karnataka</p>	<p>participants. The purpose of the symposia was to deliberate on the issue of community engagement in general and community university research partnerships in particular. The morning session of the symposium witnessed the sharing of international perspectives from the likes of <i>Dr Budd Hall</i> (Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair), <i>Dr Cristina Escrigas</i> (Project Development Advisor, GUNi), <i>Dr Carol Ma</i> (Associate Director, Office of Service Learning, Lingnan University, Hong Kong), <i>Mr Denis Dambois</i>, European Union and <i>Dr Anindya Chatterjee</i> from IDRC, India. The session was chaired by <i>Prof BL Mungekar</i>, former member, Planning Commission. The second half of the symposium focused on the trends emerging from the study conducted in association with the British Council. <i>Dr Ronki Ram</i> from Panjab University and <i>Dr Pahi Saikia</i> from Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati (IITG) shared the findings from their respective states. Valuable contributions were also made by Prof Devi Prasad from TISS, Mumbai and <i>Prof Furqan Qamar</i>, Secretary General, Association of Indian Universities.</p> <p>A detailed report on the event has been uploaded on the UNESCO Chair</p>	<p>The idea on the formation of the Alliance for Community Engagement (ACE) was initiated at the event, which will be taken forward subsequently with interested partners and universities.</p>
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		website <sup>12</sup> , and circulated within various national & international higher education networks, such as the Big Tent, Place and Social Capital and learning (PASCAL) International Observatory, Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), European Union, and Association for Commonwealth Universities (ACU).	
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\*As opposed to Madhya Pradesh (MP) & Kerala, which were proposed in the initial proposal, the project went on to cover Assam and Karnataka. The primary reason behind switch was better support, shared interests and supportive colleagues.

#### **Constraints:**

- This initiative being of one year duration only, the project proponents faced severe time constraint especially during the survey phase in the four states. Limitation of time was the common sentiment that emerged from the host universities as well, who felt that more time and resources were needed to exhaustively cover all colleges in the respective states. Therefore, a sample number of colleges were surveyed in the states. However, due care was taken of the fact that the sample selected was a representative one and provided a fairly good idea on the practices on the ground.
- Time constraint also limited the Chair's ability to partner with other universities who expressed interest in a similar nature of work. Some of such universities are North Bengal Hill University (NEHU), Mysore University, Madurai Kamaraj University etc.
- During Quarter 2, the project faced certain procedural limitations. The time period slotted for follow-up data collection in Punjab and North Bengal (April to June 2014) coincided with the annual examinations and summer vacations in the universities. This limited access to staff and students for follow-up data collection.
- Although the project proponents tried their best to include representative sample of participants at the state based workshops, at times it was difficult to get through to government officials. Limited representation from the civil society further restricted the scope of the exercise. For instance, while we were successful in reaching out to government officials in Punjab & Karnataka, we failed to do so in Bengal & Assam. However, barring Assam, we were fairly successful in reaching out to the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the rest of the states.

<sup>12</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/9\\_April\\_2015\\_event\\_report.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/9_April_2015_event_report.pdf)

## **II. ALLIED INTERVENTIONS**

The project also undertook related allied interventions. These interventions contributed to the advocating towards promoting community engagement in Indian higher education institutions.

### **1. *Seminar on 'Engaged University', at Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University, January 2014***

The UNESCO Chair co-organised a seminar on 'Engaged University' at Lady Shri Ram College, DU on January 24, 2014. Hosted by *Prof. Meenakshi Gopinath*, Former principal, Lady Shri Ram College, the seminar had *Dr Andrew Petter*, President, Simon Fraser University, Canada as the chief guest. Dr Petter focused attention on the ways and means through which we could harness and leverage the strength of universities to contribute to social responsibility. The seminar was attended by many interested students and faculty members, who actively participated in an extensive open discussion in which their queries were answered by *Dr Petter* and *Dr Rajesh Tandon*. A report on the seminar has been prepared and uploaded on the UNESCO Chair website<sup>13</sup>.

### **2. *Panel Discussion on 'University Approach to Widening Access: Opportunities in Community Colleges', March 2014***

The British Council, in association with the UNESCO Chair, hosted a panel discussion on the issue of community colleges in Chandigarh on March 6, 2014. Shri KK Sharma, Advisor to the Chandigarh Administration, graced the event as chief guest. The discussion witnessed quality contributions from *Shri KK Sharma*, Advisor to the Chandigarh Administration, *Dr Arun Kumar Grover*, Vice-Chancellor, Panjab University; *Dr Michael Osborne*, Chair & professor, Adult & Lifelong Education, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom and *Mr Ajay Mohan Goel*, Director, Skill Development, Wadhvani Foundation and *Dr Rajesh Tandon*, Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education & President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA). The full report is available on the Chair website<sup>14</sup>.

### **3. *UNESCO Chair's continuous contribution towards the roll out of the new UGC scheme on fostering community engagement***

*Dr Rajesh Tandon*, Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair served as a member of the Planning Commission's Sub-Committee on strengthening community engagement in higher education institutions. He actively contributed in the meetings of the sub-committee and participated in its deliberations which continued in 2014. He also compiled a report based on the recommendations of the sub-committee for ensuring social responsibility in HEIs (uploaded on the UNESCO website<sup>15</sup>). The recommendations of the sub-committee resulted in the University Grants Commission (UGC) rolling out a scheme for fostering community engagement and social responsibility in Indian higher

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<sup>13</sup> <http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/presentation-on-engaged-university-by-dr-andrew-petter-president-simon-fraser-university-lady-shri-ram-college-january-24-2014/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Write-Up\\_Panel%20Discussion\\_Punjab.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Write-Up_Panel%20Discussion_Punjab.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Fostering\\_Social\\_Responsibility.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Fostering_Social_Responsibility.pdf)

education institutions. The Chair has been closely following the developments, and attempting to build a consortium of interested universities under the scheme.

#### ***4. Consultation on the new UGC Scheme on 'Establishment of the Centre for Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement' January, 2015***

In an attempt to make the University Grants Commission's scheme (launched in October 2014) successful, the UNESCO Chair convened a consultation of interested universities January 30, 2015. Attended by *Dr Pankaj Mittal*, Joint Secretary, UGC, the consultation aimed to build a consensus among universities for working on this front, and to allay doubts regarding the scheme's operationalisation (Report uploaded on the Chair website<sup>16</sup>).

The Chair also volunteered to mentor and support the process of proposal development by the universities, and their capacity building for the same. Till date, the Chair has supported six universities who have successfully submitted their proposals to the UGC under the scheme. They are Bundelkhand University, Madhya Pradesh; Mysore University, Karnataka; Ambedkar University, New Delhi; Jain Vishva Bharti University, Rajasthan; Sri Venkateshwara University, Andhra Pradesh and Vishva Bharti University, West Bengal.

#### ***5. Consultation on 'Strengthening Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions', in association with Bundelkhand University, January 2015***

The UNESCO Chair co-organised a consultation on 'Strengthening Community Engagement in HEIs', at Bundelkhand University, Jhansi on January 12, 2015. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation by senior administrators of the university, faculty members, vice chancellor and students alike. While Dr Tandon briefed the gathering about the context and relevance of the topic, the Vice chancellor, *Dr Avinash Chandra Pandey*, reiterated his commitment towards the integration of community engagement into the mainstream course curriculum at his university. Bundelkhand University is one of the first universities to show interest and submit a proposal under the UGC Scheme. The full report on the consultation is available on the Chair website<sup>17</sup>.

### **PROJECT'S CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT IN INDIA**

The project 'Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions' has contributed towards strengthening the cause of community engagement in higher education institutions in a multitude of ways. The core tasks and allied interventions under the project played a crucial role in creating awareness and an enabling environment for a relatively new area of work in academia. Some of the broad achievements under the project can be summed up as:

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<sup>16</sup> [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Report\\_UGC\\_Scheme\\_ion\\_30Jan2015.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/pdf/Report_UGC_Scheme_ion_30Jan2015.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/consultation-on-strengthening-community-engagement-in-higher-education-institutions-bundelkhand-university-jhansi-uttar-pradesh-12th-january2015/>

➤ ***Awareness generation on the issue and networking among a close consortium of interested universities/partners***

The project played an important role in creating a space for community engagement within the Indian higher education framework. As the word and the concept spread, the Chair played a networking role between interested universities and partners on how to take the agenda forward. Some close partners of the Chair, who came together in this joint initiative, include Bundelkhand University, Panjab University, Ambedkar University, Dayalbagh Educational Institute and Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya. The agenda is to work towards the institutionalisation and mainstreaming of community engagement within the regular academic curriculum of universities in India.

The Ministry of Human Resources Development's decision to devise a new ranking system for Indian universities, with their social contribution forming an important criterion for evaluation, provided a fresh thrust to the efforts. Additionally, National Assessment and Accreditation Council's renewed focus on community engagement under the broad criteria of governance and management of universities for securing accreditation has renewed interest among universities to mainstream community engagement.

➤ ***Production of a research paper outlining the key findings from the issues, issues/challenges and recommendations***

The findings which emerged from the project carried out in the four states of Punjab, Bengal, Assam and Karnataka culminated in a research paper which documents the current practices of community engagement in the respective universities. This paper presents first-of-its-kind data on community engagement practices carried out by the universities. The paper also outlines the common emerging trends from the four states, as also the trends which are specific to a particular state. The paper presents the ways forward based on the discussions held in the regional consultations. This research paper paves the way for efforts to scale up community engagement by higher educational institutions in India and for extensive mapping of such practices in other higher educational institutions.

➤ ***Findings under the project contributed towards the 'India Case Study' on the book 'Mainstreaming Community University Research Partnerships'***

The findings (particularly from Assam) and the emerging trends under the project contributed towards the drafting of the chapter on a case study on India with respect to community engagement and community research partnerships in a book to be published under the IDRC sponsored global study on 'Mainstreaming community university research partnerships'. This book is expected to be published in mid-2015.

➤ ***Supporting a growing network of universities for fostering community engagement through application under the new UGC Scheme***

The Chair's untiring efforts for promoting the cause of community engagement in Indian higher educational institutions got energised under this project, playing a key role in pushing for the



development of the new UGC scheme. The Chair's efforts included supporting a growing network of universities to come forward and take necessary actions for operationalising the new UGC scheme in their respective universities. Panjab University and Mysore University, who were part of this project, showed great interest in pursuing further actions under the scheme. This project helped push for the development of the UGC scheme.

➤ ***Step towards building of an Alliance on Community Engagement (ACE)***

The Chair has also initiated the process of building an Alliance on Community Engagement (an active membership based network), which was one of the recommendations of the Planning Commission's sub-committee on strengthening community engagement in higher educational institutions. The chair has engaged in building a consensus amongst interested parties and working towards the consolidation of the consortium/alliance. This alliance is expected to serve as a steering mechanism and a platform for sharing knowledge and good practices. For this purpose, the Chair is also in talks with the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) to accord the alliance a legal status under the higher education policy framework of India.

➤ ***Future plans in association with ICSSR, NAAC, IDRC & AIU***

By partnering with diverse institutions and agencies, the Chair remains committed to creating a network of community engagement 'champions' who remain dedicated and focused. The Chair plans to collaborate with funding institutions such as Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), for securing resources and working jointly for promotion and dissemination of the agenda to universities all across the country. The Chair also plans to associate with National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), to promote the agenda of community engagement (by coming up with a collation of best practices). International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) regional director for Asia regional office in New Delhi, *Dr Anindya Chatterjee*, as follow-up to the 9<sup>th</sup> April symposium has also expressed interest in a continued collaboration with the UNESCO Chair for working on the agenda of community engagement. Similar interest was also shown by Association of Indian Universities (AIU) who has asked the Chair to come up with a practical work plan for enforcing community engagement in colleges and universities on a practical and real-time basis.