

Social equity measures in the agricultural higher education system

R. C. Agrawal*, Hema Tripathi, Ritika Joshi, R. Chaubey and Dhiraj K. Singh

Agricultural education is crucial to produce skilled human resources to take up present and emerging challenges faced by Indian agriculture. Over the last decade, agricultural higher education attractiveness has improved due to access to quality education, attractiveness in employment market, and widening career opportunities across social and geographical areas. While continuing to provide better quality and more relevant education in agriculture, ICAR, in association with World Bank, initiated National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) in 2017. The project development objective is to enhance the quality and relevance of agricultural higher education in the country. NAHEP has also adopted social inclusion by providing national and international training to student and faculty. In addition, various special initiatives are being undertaken to enable access to the essential amenities for differently abled, female students and faculties. To take it forward and make it sustainable, this article also suggests key measures.

Keywords: Agricultural higher education system, equity action plan, gender equality, skilled human resource, social equity.

HIGHER education enrollment rates have been continuously rising for the last 30 years with the support of policies directed towards widening access to higher education to a broader population. However, it is critical to design a framework for openness in higher education, mainly due to the heterogeneity of the population that the policies are targeted towards. Such a population includes individuals from various socio-economic, ethnic, innate ability, talent orientation or disability groups, as well as people with different social commitments.

Enhancing the quality of human resources is an essential pre-requisite for implementing and upgrading research programmes, developing technologies and institutional arrangements to harness opportunities by addressing emerging challenges in agriculture and allied sectors. The aim of social inclusion is now at the heart of the new National Education Policy (NEP). It has critically examined the existing equity and inclusion in higher education and identified some key initiatives to be undertaken such as disabled-friendly campus, the development of bridge courses, regular and suitable counselling and mentoring programmes for underprivileged groups, inclusive curriculums, etc.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi through its various initiatives for agricultural higher education, has been regularly involved in introducing and implementing policies/schemes that support equal and

quality education for all social groups. For example, initiatives like providing scholarships to students, increasing the number of ICAR-sponsored seats in State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), ensuring the reach of education in tribal regions, etc. Such initiatives would not only support promoting agricultural higher education for socially underprivileged groups but also provide them with equal opportunity for quality education.

While continuing to provide better quality and more relevant education in agriculture, ICAR, in association with World Bank, initiated the National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) in 2017. It is currently being implemented across 62 SAUs of the 'ICAR AU System', to ensure quality and relevant education to students through various initiatives like capacity-building programmes at the national and international levels, establishing global standard modern infrastructure for students and faculty to enhance their competencies, establishing students and faculty linkages through national and international level trainings, providing exposure through extracurricular activities like industry exposure visits and introducing market-oriented pilot courses in the emerging areas of agriculture and allied sciences. Some of the major activities under this Project focus on inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for students and faculty, access to equal and affordable vocational training, greater gender and wealth equity through universal access to quality higher education. A well-defined functionality has been introduced, i.e. social safeguard measures (SSM).

The authors are in the National Agricultural Higher Education Project, ICAR HQ, New Delhi 110 012, India.

*For correspondence. (e-mail: nd.nahep@icar.gov.in)

This article illustrates the key initiatives undertaken by SSM of NAHEP and suggestions to ensure this project's sustainability and future course of action with effective implementation of the social inclusion mechanism.

Equity action plan measures

The main objectives of EAP is to ensure an equal opportunity to avail the project's benefits with substantial improvement in their performance with particular attention to the needy and ST and SC category and female social groups. To achieve this, all Project-assisted universities must prepare and implement EAP as an integral part of NAHEP.

As a part of EAP, Agriculture Universities (AUs) have designed different capacity-building programmes to ensure improvement in the performance of academically weak students and organized national-level training programmes to create a platform for exposure and experiential learning. Major emphasis is on enhancing the overall visibility of AUs among different stakeholders, attracting talented students and systemic reforms in the education system to address the language and communication constraints among students of weaker sections. Most of the AUs have initiated training and motivational classes to promote leadership quality among students. A number of initiatives taken by the NAHEP under EAP, towards enhancing access with equity through provision of various over-sea, national and soft skills training, remedial classes, support to institutions with a relatively higher proportion of STs, SCs and minorities, support to persons with disabilities, empowerment of women, safety and security followed during civil work and grievance redressal mechanism, etc.

Social inclusion of students in national and overseas training programmes

As a part of EAP, AUs must organize capacity-building programmes to ensure improvement in the performance of academically weak students. A high motivation has been given to enhancing employability and build entrepreneurship capabilities of students to ameliorate the programme's ripple effect on society. Industry visits and skill development programmes have also been organized to cater to the current market needs and enable the students to emerge as 'job creators' rather than 'job seekers'. A total of 146,730 students (23,662 ST, 21,876 SC and 101,192 from the general category) have benefitted from national-level training programmes. The participation rate of ST students has increased from 8% to 12%, SC from 14% to 16.4%, and female students from 39% to 44.8% during the Project period.

Providing global experience through overseas training to students is an integral part of NAHEP, which plays a pivotal role in enhancing their learning outcomes and employability. The Project has been encouraging and supporting students

and faculty of partner AUs to visit international HEIs, learn about the emerging areas of science and technology in agriculture and share their rich experiences gained during the training for the betterment of the Indian agricultural ecosystem. So far, 664 students have undergone international training in more than 330 emerging areas of agriculture and allied sectors, and have visited ~110 international HEIs across the globe¹. The participation rate of ST, SC and female students in overseas training programmes has increased from 3% to 9%, 8% to 19.2% and 56% to 57.1% respectively. Such interventions have boosted their confidence, thus breaking societal barriers.

Students were interviewed by sending them a questionnaire to know their feedback regarding these interventions. More than 90% of the students rated them as highly satisfactory. According to the students, the training helped them develop entrepreneurship spirit and leadership skills and provided a chance to develop linkages with foreign universities as future opportunities. They also developed awareness of market-oriented course curriculum, professional skill development: communication, personality development, problem-solving skill, and finally, readying them to meet industry needs due to exposure to globally recognized HEIs. Moreover, through remedial classes, students learnt about the topics to focus on, a central aspect of the subject, which helped them during the examination.

Social inclusion of faculty in national and overseas training programmes

NAHEP has also been supporting the faculty to improve their knowledge, pedagogical skills and sensitivity to gender equality and social inclusion issues in agriculture educational institutions through overseas and national-level training. The focus of international training for faculty has been on upgrading the existing pedagogy methodologies, enhancing the research effectiveness, establishing linkages with international HEIs, etc. A total of 224 faculty (25 ST, 27 SC and 90 women) from the participating AUs have undergone training in more than 60 international universities. The participation of ST, SC and women faculty has increased from 4.2% to 17.0%, 3.2% to 22.5% and 32.6% to 50.2% respectively, since the inception of this Project. About 13,000 faculty members (681 ST, 1608 SC and 5585 women) participated in various national-level training programmes, seminars and workshops, both virtually and physically. Due to the NAHEP interventions, the participation of ST, SC and women faculty has increased from 2% to 9.5%, 6% to 15.7% and 22% to 41.8% respectively, till June 2022.

Faculty who underwent international and national-level training were also interviewed. More than 80% rated it highly satisfactory². They mentioned that the training helped them improve their teaching effectiveness, collaborative research/linkages with foreign universities for future opportunities, market orientation in research/research effectiveness, and

capability to win competitive grants/externally funded projects.

Strengthening infrastructure for differently abled and female students and faculty

Accessibility to the basic amenities is mandatory for everybody to enable them to carry out their daily activities, specifically for disabled students and faculty to all resources according to their needs. The university campus should be safe, comfortable and barrier-free³. The strengthening of infrastructure aims to provide a barrier-free environment on university campuses. For making a physically and socially gender-friendly university campus, a number of user-friendly initiatives have been taken that created high satisfaction among the students and faculty. It includes ramps, modification of user-friendly washrooms, installation of CCTV cameras to enhance women's security, incinerators for safe disposal of sanitary napkins, escalators, provision of sufficient wheelchairs, signboards, street lights, alarm/hooters in case of emergency, etc. Such facilities/infrastructure were poor or almost not available before the implementation of NAHEP⁴.

Potentiality of social equity interventions

To understand the potential outcome of the social equity measures, a proforma was circulated to all 62 Project-awarded universities. Responses from students and faculty were received and analysed. Point-wise outcomes revealed by the respondents are as follows.

Improvement in student enrollment percentage

Overall enrollment percentage showed an increase in ST, SC and female students by 24.4, 3.98 and 16.12 respectively. Students with a disability also showed an increase of 8.65% from the project inception to till date.

Promotion of young agri-entrepreneurs

A good number of the ST, SC and female students became entrepreneurs and the percentage increase was 14.3 for ST and 17.3 for SC students since the Project inception. Some of the AUs established incubation centres and engaged on-campus students with budding entrepreneurs. Due to this initiative, around 60 AU students have become agri-entrepreneurs.

Striving for success through placement

Interventions increased the placement rate by 19.3% among female students and 18.8% among SC/ST students since

the Project inception. During the preliminary assessment of the potential economic benefits of NAHEP, the employment success in terms of increase in average wages of the beneficiary workforce and additional revenue contribution to the economy due to comparatively higher placement rates were estimated for a year-on-year basis for three continuous batches of final-year undergraduate students of select AUs.

Strengthening industry linkages

Strengthening industry linkages provides practical experience to the students which led to enhance their skills and entrepreneurial capabilities. As a result, industry linkages between ST and female students increased by 15.1% and 22.4% respectively since the Project inception.

Knowledge enhancement and improvement in English

As a result of remedial classes, students' transition rate (with all subjects) from the first to the second year increased to an average of 4.21% (95–99%). Similarly, English coaching classes showed an average increase of 30% in marks obtained in pre- and post-test evaluation. The faculty showed a tremendous increase in the development of resource materials with a thrust on social/equity papers, reading material, etc. due to exposure visits within and outside India.

Specific interventions for women and backward classes

EAP focused on improving the learning efficiency and skill sets of students, especially the underprivileged groups, including SC, ST and female students. It also promoted mentorship amongst backward-class students and teachers. Overseas training, national and university-level training, thrust on weaker students, and participation in remedial classes and competitions encouraged female and backward-class students to join the mainstream of agricultural education. Female students have been given the privilege of international training programmes by reserving 33.33% of the total slots for them. The guidelines of international training programmes have made relaxations in the CGPA of SC/ST students from 7.5 to 7.0. Emphasis is being given to such students for placement, internship and entrepreneurship programmes in the universities. The initiation of user-friendly campuses has created a secure environment for female students. Development and implementation of the grievance redressal mechanism (online portal) have allowed female students/faculty/staff to raise their concerns without fear of counter attack.

All these specific interventions have made significant achievements in the performance of female students. Due to these interventions, agricultural universities on time graduation rate of the female students increased by 18.8%

Box 1. Deprivation points given by JNU

Quartile 1 marks

Programme of study applied for	10th/12th	UG
Undergraduate (UG)	6	
Postgraduate (PG)	3	3

Quartile 2 marks

Programme of study applied for	10th/12th	UG
UG	4	
PG	2	2

Note for 10th and 12th class quartile:

- If 10th from Q1 and 12th from Q1, then benefit of Q1.
- If 10th from Q1 and 12th from Q2, then benefit of Q1.
- If 10th from Q2 and 12th from Q1, then benefit of Q1.
- If 10th from Q2 and 12th from Q2, then benefit of Q2.

List of quartile districts drawn from each state in the form of Q1 and Q2 has been made using the following four parameters according to the provisional figures of the Census of India 2011 and are listed below.

- Per cent female illiteracy.
- Per cent agricultural workers.
- Per cent rural population.
- Percentage of households having no toilets within their premises.

(77.0 to 95.8), cut-off scores of female students in ICAR entrance tests increased by 5.8 percentile (27.0 to 32.8), placement rate increased up to 19.3% (41.0 to 60.3) and enrollment rate up to 16.1 percentage (35.5 to 41.2) from the base line data (at the start of project).

Interventions have also made an impact on the SC/ST students. The cut-off scores in ICAR entrance tests has increased by 29.4 percentile (26.0–55.4), placement rate by 18.8% (50.0–68.8), and enrollment rate by 12.3% (18.7–21.0).

Inclusiveness, social/equity measures as the future course of action

Implementation of NAHEP mandates has been sufficiently sensitive in the adoption of various measures that would make inclusion and equity measures an integral part of the project unrolling. Further strategies are highlighted here based on their prevalence in other central universities and institutes of eminence that have been able to produce remarkable results as far as addressing the issues of equity is concerned.

Deprivation points

One of the important visions behind the establishment of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi in 1969 was to take special measures to facilitate students and teachers from all over India to join the University and participate in its academic programmes.

The admission policy of JNU is governed by the following principles:

- To ensure the admission of students with academic competence and high potential so that its alumni will be able to play a role in nation-building and social change in a meaningful manner.
- To ensure that an adequate number of students from the underprivileged and socially backward sections of our society are admitted to the University.
- To maintain the all-India character of the University by having on its rolls a fair representation of students from different regions of the country, especially from the backward areas.

Deprivation points (up to a maximum of 12 points) are given by JNU to the candidates of the following categories⁵: A candidate would get separate points for each educational level, i.e. tenth standard/high school/matriculation/12th standard/Intermediate and B.A./B.Sc. from either a quartile 1 (Q1) or quartile 2 (Q2) district as given by Box 1.

Candidates hailing from Q1 and Q2 districts (those in which the candidates reside) who have passed and/or appeared in their respective qualifying examinations through the Distant Education Programme are also eligible for deprivation points. They should indicate the state, district and district code under the respective column of the application form. They should also indicate whether they have passed and/or appeared in the qualifying examination through the Distant education programme.

The success of the admission policy of JNU is visible by a noticeable representation of students coming from some of the most remote and extremely backward areas of India. A long tradition of learning of students from these areas has a ripple effect and has contributed to a great extent to the gradual transformation of these areas and the improvement of their indicators of backwardness. Though this is difficult to measure, its impact on turning the fortunes of these areas is unmistakable.

Suggestions for HEIs based on this admission policy

While all the Central Agricultural Universities can adopt the positive aspect of the above-mentioned admission policy of JNU, the other AUs falling outside this ambit can be encouraged to chalk out a plan for providing preference to students based on regional disparity in the location of these universities.

Scheme of free coaching for students belonging to SC/ST and OBC category

The Ministry of Social Justice, Government of India (GoI), has initiated the free coaching scheme. The objective of this scheme is to provide coaching of good quality for economically disadvantaged SC and other backward class (OBC) candidates to enable them to appear in competitive examinations and succeed in obtaining appropriate jobs in the public/private sector.

Implementing agencies

The scheme will be implemented through reputed coaching institutions/centres run by the following:

- (1) Central Government/State Governments/Union Territory Administrations/Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)/autonomous bodies under Central/State Governments.
- (2) Universities (both Central and State), including Deemed Universities and Private Universities, recognized by the concerned authority.
- (3) Registered private institutions/NGOs.

The courses for which the coaching will be imparted are as follows:

- (1) Group A and B examinations are conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and the various Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs).
- (2) Group A and B examinations are conducted by the State Public Service Commission.
- (3) Officers' grade examinations are conducted by banks, insurance companies and PSUs.

- (4) The main entrance examinations for admission in (a) engineering (e.g. IIT-JEE and AIEEE), (b) medical (e.g. AIPMT), (c) professional courses like management (e.g. CAT) and law (e.g. CLAT), and (d) any other such disciplines that the Ministry of Social Justice may decide from time to time.
- (5) Eligibility tests/examinations like SAT, GRE, GMAT and TOEFL.

Eligibility criteria to apply for empanelment of coaching institutions

- (1) The institution should be a registered body or run by any organization registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860/Companies Act, 2013 or any other relevant State/Union Territory Act.
- (2) The institution should have been registered at least for three years as of the date of notification inviting applications from States/UTs/coaching institutions for empanelment by the Ministry of Social Justice.
- (3) The institution should have been fully functional for a minimum period of three years at the time of applying under this scheme and having a minimum enrolment of 100 students in the courses as indicated at each year for at least two years, immediately prior to the year in which it is selected for empanelment.
- (4) The institution must have the proper infrastructure to meet all the requirements for providing coaching in the courses applied for.

Take away for NAHEP from this scheme to ensure inclusiveness/EAP

This scheme is in alignment with an affirmative action plan as provided in our constitution and has the potential for fulfilment of entitlement-based quota, especially for SCs and STs. NAHEP Project Implementation Unit (PIU), in discussion with the participating universities and Ministry of Education, can suggest names of universities where such an infrastructure/cell can be established on a pilot basis, especially in areas with a greater concentration of population belonging to these categories. Based on the success of the scheme it can be further extended to other willing partners.

Besides helping to fulfil the entitlement-based quota of these sections of the population, this measure carries great potential for popularizing the study of agricultural science. (Annexure 1 provides a list of currently identified coaching centres/institutions by the Ministry of Social Justice, GoI).

Apni kyari apni thali – an initiative to locate a university in the surrounding social milieu

This is an initiative of Bihar Agricultural University (BAU) Sabour, Bhagalpur, to fight malnutrition through agricultural

GENERAL ARTICLE

Annexure 1. Institutions/centres currently empaneled for giving free coaching to students of SC and OBC

State/UT	Institution	Course(s)	Contact Number
Assam	(1) Chitale's Personalized Learning Pvt. Ltd., 182, Chandas Tower, Hatigaon, Guwahati 781 006, Kamrup, Assam	JEE and MBA Entrance	8828435393
Bihar	(1) The Gurukul Practice Centre, 1st Floor, Near Durga Mandir, Maranpur, Bodhgaya Road, District-Gaya 823 001, Bihar	NEET and IIT-JEE	9321085949
Chandigarh	(1) Bulls Eye (Mind Tree Eduvation Pvt. Ltd.), SCO 90-92, 2nd Floor, Sector-8C, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh	GRE/GMAT and CAT	0172-4611111
	(2) MT Educare Ltd., SCO-350-351-352, Ground Floor, Sector-34 A, Chandigarh 160 022	NEET and CA-CPT	9888590575
Delhi	(1) Jan Kalyan Shiksha Samittee, Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No. 15, Sector-IV, R.K. Puram, Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 022	UPSC (Pre-cum Mains)	011-2619665, 26183070
	(2) Career Power Metis Eduventures Private Limited, 201-204, Second Floor, Pragati Deep, Distt.-Centre, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi 110 092	Banking and SSC	011-43061500
	(3) Sachdeva New P.T. College, New Delhi, 29-South Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110 008	SSC and Bank PO	011-25848070/8182, 9810008070
	(4) IES Academy Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 28 B/7, 2nd Floor, Jia Sarai Near IIT, Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016	IES and GATE	011-26537570, 09810958290
	(5) Career Plus Educational Society, 301/A-37, 38,39, Ansal Building, Commercial Complex, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi 110 009	UPSC and SPSC	9811069629
	(6) BSC Academy Pvt. Ltd., C-37, Ganesh Nagar, Pandav Nagar Complex, Delhi 110 092	Banking Exam (PO, Clerk) and SSC	011-22484910
	(7) Meridian Courses, B-13, 3rd Floor, Commercial Complex, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi	UPSC and SPSC	011-27652131, 9312577533
	(8) Dikshant Education Centre, 301-303, A-31-34, Jaina House Extension, Commercial Complex, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi 110 009	UPSC and SPSC	011-47082542
Gujarat	(1) MT Educare Ltd, C/16, 17, 3rd Floor, Trident Mall, Near Race Course Circle, Vadodara 390 007, Gujarat	JEE and CA-CPT	9714990100
	(2) Chitale's Personalized Learning Pvt. Ltd., 501, Manas Complex, Opposite Star Bazar, Near Jodhpur Cross Road, Satellite, Ahmedabad 380 015, Gujarat	UPSC and MBA Entrance	9714789555
	(3) Aryan Foundation, Taksh Complex-1, First Floor-A, Vasna Road, Vadodara, Gujarat	NEET and CA-CPT	8828435352
Haryana	(1) LILAC Education Pvt. Ltd., M-24, Old DLF Colony, Sector-14, Gurgaon	UPSC and SPSC	09899483203
Jammu & Kashmir	(1) Bandipora College of Information Technology, Hospital Road, Near Faziam School, Ward No. 5, Bandipora, Jammu & Kashmir 193 502	KAS (Kashmir Administration Service) and AIEEE	01957-225546
Karnataka	(1) Global Education Trust, 2nd Floor, Sri Nidhi Complex, Nr. Kudroli Temple, Alake, Mangalore 575 003	NEET and JEE	9004608002
	(2) Aryan Foundation, Near Kottara Chowki, Bangra Kulur, Mangalore, Karnataka	NEET and JEE	7760885338
Madhya Pradesh	(1) Perfect Samajik Evam Shikshan Samiti, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	Bank PO and RRB	0755-2775533, 9827090217
	(2) Tanishk Shikshan Evam Samaj Kalyan Sanstha Samiti, M.P. Nagar, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	Bank PO and RRB	0755-2554800, 9827361802
	(3) Comp-Feeders Takiniki Prashikshan Sansthan, Indore, Madhya Pradesh (Centres: Ujjain and Ratlam)	Banking and RRB	0731-2788978, 9981137184
	(4) Excellent Civil Academy Trust, K.K. Plaza Zone, M.P. Nagar, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	UPSC (Pre-cum Mains)	9355602224
	(5) Disha Diya Education Trust, J.K. Town, Kolar Road, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	IIT-JEE and NEET/AIPMT	0184-2207540, 8901322234
Maharashtra	(1) The Gurukul Practice Centre, A-102, Riddhi-Siddhi Apartment, Plot No. B-7, Sector-20, Nerul West, Above PNB Bank, Navi Mumbai 400 706	NEET and IIT-JEE	7666584292
	(2) Global Education Trust, Mulund, Mumbai, Maharashtra	CA-CPT	9004608002
	(3) Chitale's Personlised Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd., Mulund, Mumbai, Maharashtra	Bank PO	9821301498
	(4) MT Educare Ltd., Mulund, Maharashtra	UPSC	022-25937700
	(5) Aryan Foundation, Borivali (W), Mumbai, Maharashtra	NEET	0824-2881000

(Contd)

Annexure 1. (Contd)

State/UT	Institution	Course(s)	Contact Number
Manipur	(1) Youth Step Forward Centre, Wangjing Bazar, P.O.-Wangjing Bazar, Manipur 795 148	AIPMT/NEET and IIT JEE/AIEEE	9436663161
Meghalaya	(1) Sachdeva New P.T. College, Room No.-13, 1st Floor, Block-B, Shillong College, Boyce Road, Shillong	SSC and Bank PO	9810008070
Punjab	(1) MT Educare Ltd., SCO-135, Above Coke Agency Near Nabha Gate, Patiala 147 001, Punjab	JEE and CA-CPT	9702709888
	(2) Global Education Trust, SFC, 101 Near Indian Overseas Bank, Chotti Baradari, Patiala 147 001, Punjab	NEET and JEE	9004608002
	(3) Chitale's Personalized Learning Pvt. Ltd., SCO 136-141, Near ICICI Bank, Chotti Baradari, Patiala 147 001, Punjab	UPSC and MBA Entrance	9702702666
Rajasthan	(1) Patanjali IAS Classes Pvt. Ltd., B.O.-31, Patanjali Bhawan, Satya Vihar Lalkothi, Near Jain ENT Hospital, Jaipur 302 015	UPSC and SPSC	0141-2741123
	(2) Mother's Education Hub, J-7, Near Kanha Sweets, Infront of Big Bazaar, Gopalpura Pulia, Jaipur 302 018, Rajasthan.	Bank PO and SSC	9828622200
	(3) Career Point Limited, B-28, 10-B Schemes, Gopalpura Bypass, Jaipur 302 018, Rajasthan	IIT-JEE and Pre-Medical (PMT)	7443040000, 7443040050
Tamil Nadu	(1) MT Educare Ltd., No. 7, 1st Floor, Rosy Tower, Nungambakkam High Road, Opposite ICAI institute, Nungambakkam, Chennai 600 034	NEET and CA-CPT	9987567100
	(2) Shankar IAS Academy, Shanti Colony, Annanagar, Chennai 600 040	UPSC and TNPSC-Pre.	044-45522227, 044-43533445
Tripura	(1) Sachdeva New P.T. College, Office of the OBC Commission, 1st Floor, VIP Road, Gurkhabasti, Agartala	SSC and Bank PO	9810008070
Uttar Pradesh	(1) Pioneer Foundation, 250/15 KA, Shyamkunj, Yahliaganj, Lucknow 226 001	Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering	9918337808
	(2) PMT Physics College, Lucknow, 31/56, M.G. Marg, Above Bata & Kay Sons Showroom, Opposite Hotel Capoor's, Hazratganj, Lucknow 226 001	Pre-Medical (NEET) and Pre-Engineering (IIT/UPSEE)	0522-2616637
Himachal Pradesh	(1) Himalayan Institute of Engineering and Technology, Sadhaura Road, Kala Amb, Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh (Centre: Sirmour and Solan)	JEE and CMAT (Common Management Admission Test)	9671300970
Odisha	(1) AAKASH Coaching Institution, Near Salipur Autonomous College, Cuttack, Odisha	AIEEE and Banking	06762-247048, 9438772420
	(2) The Shine Institute, PO: Kunjakanta, Dist: Dhenkanal, Odisha	AIEEE and Banking	06762-228047, 8658566790

intervention in collaboration with Integrated Child Development Services (Department of Social Welfare, Government of Bihar). The programme 'Apni kyari apni thali' (AKAT) aims to bring together the agricultural and nutritional expertise of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and dedicated frontline workers of Anganwadi Kendras to address nutritional deficiency in underprivileged infants and their mothers through agricultural interventions. The programme, through diet diversification and adding mushroom-enriched food, has been a great success, and Government of Bihar has adopted the AKAT scheme for implementation at 18,000 Anganwadi Centres, which has land resources of its own.

Take away from this initiative for HEIs

The AKAT scheme has tremendous potential for bringing AUs closer to the common people's daily lives. It greatly helps in adding value to the knowledge and expertise pre-

vailing in the AUs by linking them to the health and food habits of the surrounding population, especially the sections that are supported by various schemes of the state for their sustenance. Gratefulness of catered segment has positive impact on developing learning esteem in the AUs.

Conclusion

EAP helped in ensuring that all students and faculty in the AUs get equal opportunity to avail the project's benefits with particular attention to the needy and ST and SC category and female social groups. Interventions carried out under the Project have boosted the confidence of SC, ST and female students and faculty, and supported them in breaking societal barriers.

The inclusion of social equity measures helped in improving student enrolment; increasing the number of young agri-entrepreneurs; increasing placement and wage rates; improving employability and entrepreneurial capabilities

through effective industry engagements; Increasing students' transition rate (with all subjects) and increasing the development of resource materials with a thrust on social/equity papers, reading material, etc. due to the exposure visits within and outside the country. Implementation of NAHEP mandates has been sufficiently sensitive in adopting various initiatives that would make the issue of inclusion and equity measures an integral part of the Project unrolling.

In addition, some strategies are highlighted based on their prevalence in other Central Universities and institutes of eminence that have been able to produce remarkable results as far as addressing the issues of equity is concerned. Such learnings and suggestions have been presented for future course of action in agricultural higher education.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

1. Agarwal, R. C. *et al.* (eds), *Response Catalogue of International Training under NAHEP*. Project Implementation Unit (PIU), National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP), Agricultural Educa-

tion Division, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, 2020; <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/b73c2f8f51.html#page/2>

2. NAHEP, Annual Report, PIU, NAHEP, Agricultural Education Division, ICAR, New Delhi, 2020-21; <https://nahep.icar.gov.in/pdf/NAHEP%20Book%202021%20Final.pdf>
3. GoI, National Education Policy. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020, pp. 41–42; https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
4. Tripathi, H. *et al.* (eds), *Nurturing Social Equity under NAHEP*, PIU, NAHEP, Agricultural Education Division, ICAR, New Delhi, 2022; <https://nahep.icar.gov.in/NahepAchievement/NuturingSocialEquity-NAHEP-6th%20June>
5. <http://www.jnu.ac.in/RTI/Admission%20Policy.pdf>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. We thank Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, World Bank and the Government of India for financial support.

Received 16 September 2022; revised accepted 6 January 2023

doi: 10.18520/cs/v124/i5/539-546
