National Rural Youth Fest- 2013
Theme for the Fest: *Youth and Water*—“Making Every Drop Count”.

**Background**
The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) was established in 1936, as ‘Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work’. In 1944, it was renamed as TISS. In 1964, it was accorded the status of Deemed University. It is funded by the University Grants Commission since then. Since its inception in 1936, TISS never limited itself to the mandate of a conventional university, but rather worked for the promotion of sustainable, equitable and participatory development, social welfare and justice. In recognition of its social contribution and academic excellence, it was awarded a 5-Star rating by NAAC in 2002.

The Rural Campus was established following a review undertaken by the Institute in its golden jubilee year 1987. The campus was established with the goals of promoting initiatives for sustainable, eco-friendly and equitable socio-economic development of rural communities, with a focus on gender and social justice. Through its programs, the School of Rural Development (SRD) seeks to contribute to the revival of the rural economy, society and polity by promoting alternatives in development. In order to achieve this, SRD evolved a four-dimensional program comprising teaching, training, field action and research & documentation. It has built a strong team of multidisciplinary faculty drawn from social work, philosophy, sociology, economics, agriculture, and other related disciplines.

SRD, TISS Tuljapur is celebrating 25 years of its existence in a major backward area of Marathwada, namely Tuljapur. SRD traces its origins to an initiative to begin and sustain the involvement of TISS in the field of rural development, that too in one of the socio-economically backward and agro-ecologically difficult regions of the country. Marathwada is home to the largest population of Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes (NT&DNT) in addition to Scheduled Castes (SC) in the State of Maharashtra. The NT&DNT like the SC in Marathwada are recognized as the poorest of the poor, disenfranchised by the much reviled caste system. The area is also drought prone with scanty rainfall, and falls in a seismic zone that increases the risk of earthquakes and natural disasters.

SRD has now evolved into a full-fledged educational institute with a fully residential campus spread over 100 acres of land. The land was given by the Maharashtra Government to enable TISS to undertake and initiate rural development activities for rural communities in surrounding villages and blocks of Osmanabad District. The initial focus of the Institute on rural development projects and field action, has widened to include academic activity with grass root work in the last 7 years. Since 2004 TISS-School of
Rural Development (SRD), attempts to prepare the cadre of development practitioners who are equipped with sound knowledge, skills, attitude and experiences to work with the village communities. SRD began by offering a Bachelors Degree in Social Work (BASW-RD) and a Masters Degree in Social Work with specialization in Rural Development (MASW-RD). More than 250 students, largely hailing from rural community, has successfully graduated from the SRD and are working with many grass root organizations across India. After several batches of the Bachelors Degree in Social Work, SRD has moved to an Integrated Social Sciences Programme.

**National Rural Youth Fest : Concept**

TISS is not only an integration of academia but also an ardent effort of actions inspired by progressive ideas of development and social change. It has been creating avenues for rural communities to articulate their respective issues and to act on issues in a sustainable manner. National Rural Youth Fest is one of the initiatives conceived by the students of SRD. It aims at generating and sustaining a platform for exploring, exchanging, reflecting and introspecting ideas on rural development across a wide range of actors such as social science students, development practitioners, scholars, researchers and the youths in the village communities.

In 2008-09 SRD made the first attempt to reach out to rural youths in Marathwada region by organizing the Rural Youth Fest. The response was very encouraging and about 400 youths participated in the festival. TISS-SRD expanded the idea of organizing the Rural youth Fest in subsequent years. In the academic year 2010-11, SRD expanded the event to a national level. More than 2000 rural youths across the nation participated in the events. Surprisingly, the event crossed the administrative boundaries India and SRD hosted near about 40 participants from the neighboring country, Nepal.

This year, we aspire at making the Rural Youth Fest a national level event, thereby promoting a dialogue between the rural youth and students, practitioners, scholars, and researchers

**Objectives:**

- To establish a dialogue between the youth, academicians and rural development agencies across the nation with the prime aim of mapping ideas and stimulating debates on rural development.
- To sustain and reinforce the spirit of volunteerism amongst the youth so as to ensure a people centered development practice in rural areas.
- To highlight multi-dimensional facets of cultural heritage and to promote the participation of youth in various activities.

We would like to invite everyone interested to take part in this festival which aims at mapping and analyzing gaps in rural progress so as to define our role as youth, academia, Civil Society Organizations and Government agencies in developing Rural India.

**Theme for the Fest : Youth and Water- “Making Every Drop Count”**
The theme of the fest this year is **Youth and Water- “Making Every Drop Count”**.

The pressure on our global water supplies is growing for the past couple of decades. At present about 41% of the world's population lives with what UNESCO calls "severe water stress", and that number is predicted to rise to two-thirds by 2025.

Marathwada, where the School of Rural Development (SRD) Tuljapur of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) is located, plays an important role in defining our engagement with rural communities. A high proportion of dalits, nomadic tribes and de-notified tribes in the region lead a life characterised by exploitation and oppression. Cyclical drought compounds hunger and insecurity, making migration a way of life for the landless and marginal farmer and trafficking of women a regular feature. Every year the water in the region is dwindling as the area faces lack of rainfall.

The average rainfall of this region in 767 mm. In the current year (2012) the annual rainfall was only 387mm that is, a 49.5 % shortfall from the normal. Inadequate rainfalls in the last two years have dried up many small irrigation projects and the water in dams is not sufficient to last till the next monsoon. We are trying to make the partakers aware of the crisis of water shortage and how we can take a step towards water justice.

The crisis of water in the region is vastly compounded by the agro-ecologically unsustainable cropping pattern in the region. Sugarcane is one of the dominant and profitable crops cultivated in the region. The cultivation of such water intensive crops are not only affecting the water table of the region and increasing water stress, but it also accentuates the existing inequalities, particularly unequal access to resources and livelihoods.

SRD did some groundwork in 2011 for taking a stock of the current perception and perspective of various stakeholders in the Marthwada region on drought conditions. We realize that the current perception and perspectives of stakeholders are largely shaped by technocratic understanding of the problem and the voices of people who are the victims of the drought conditions are at the periphery of the contemporary discussions. We realize there is a need to develop social science perspective on the question of water. The issue of water is neither a question which can be answered within the basic science discipline nor a problem that can be addressed through technocratic solutions. The role of state and market in the process of conservation, commodification, controlling and distribution of limited water resources needs to be examined and debated. The impact of water crisis on various social stratum needs to be examined. Keeping in view some of these concerns, the SRD decided to deliberate on the question of water during the NRYF-13.
Events Planned

Our experience in organizing Rural Youth Fest at the national level offered us many valuable lessons in the planning of future NRYF events. In the past, SRD successfully mobilized a good number of first generation youth who belong to marginalized communities to participate in the youth fest. However, we are realizing that there is a need to reach out to rural youth from other states. We have come across expressions of interest to participate in the NRYF events from the academic institutions which are located in various other parts of rural India. One of the major limitations which constrain youth from such academic institutions to participate is that they have to invest a lot of time and energy in their travel to our campus. It affects their academic engagement at home institutes or universities. In addition, it puts constrains on our budget and other logistic support available for SRD. The fest has been planned keeping in mind that it does not create more pressure on water resources available at SRD and Tuljpaур town. Further, we also come across request from youths with disability who are facing mobility challenge to participate in our events. Considering the request, we decided to conduct a couple of events through the online mode.

The events in NRYF 2013 will be based on our theme and different competitive and non-competitive events will be organized in this fest. They are categorized as follows:
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<th>Event</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<td><strong>National Social Science Quiz</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Photography</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Debate</strong></td>
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Cultural Events

**Street Play- Abhivyakti**
Focus: National Level
Potential Participants: Under Graduate students and Post Graduate Students

**Folk Dance**
Focus: National Level
Potential Participants: Under Graduate students and Post Graduate Students

**Folk song**
Focus: National Level
Potential Participants: Under Graduate students and Post Graduate Students

**Fine Arts:** Poster Painting
Focus: National Level
Potential Participants: High School Students, +2 Students and Undergraduate students

**Rangoli**
Focus: Local and Regional
Potential Participants: Women SHG Members
Sports

Cricket
Focus: Local and Regional
Potential Participants: Village Youth Club Members and Youths associated with Community Based Organizations/NGOS

Kho-Kho
Focus: Local and Regional
Potential Participants: High School Students, +2 Students, Under Graduate and Undergraduate students

Kabadi
Focus: Local and Regional
Potential Participants: High School Students, +2 Students

Volleyball
Focus: Local and Regional
Potential Participants: High School Students, +2 Students, Under Graduate and Undergraduate students
Special Events

Position Paper Presentation (Theme: Public Private Partnership and Water)

Focus: National Level

Potential Participants: Water Department Authorities, Water Industry, NGO Staff, Political Party leaders, Media Persons and Activists

Demonstration of Water Conservation Techniques and Models

Focus: National Level

Potential Participants: Water Department Authorities, Water Industry, NGO Staff and PRI office bearers

Handicraft Exhibitions

SRDians Alumni Meet

Potential Participants: All students, staff and teachers who studied or worked with SRD Campus during last 25 years.