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University of Warwick & NIEPA Research Project

WIDENING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES



WAHEI Visit Report September 2025: 3rd Research Methodology Workshop & Outreach Module piloting

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1. Introduction & Purpose of Visit

In September 2025, Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart from the University of Warwick, UK, visited India for two weeks. This visit was preceded by meticulous planning, arrangements, and coordination by Dr Sabharwal and the NIEPA-WAHEI project team (Ms Sejjal and Ms Chandrika), with critical institutional support from NIEPA. The State Research Teams visited NIEPA in New Delhi for a two-day interactive workshop presenting and reflecting on the findings of the state teams' research work and the project as a whole. The second core purpose of the visit was to engage in a pilot of the Professional Learning Module for Faculty Members on HE Outreach, and to conduct a research evaluation of the pilot. Additionally, it included visits and meetings to the Assam-based State Research Team (Prof Henderson) and to O. P. Jindal Global University in Haryana (Prof Henderson) and the National Law School in Odisha (Prof Stewart) to continue ongoing collaborations of University of Warwick with these institutions. The visit thus marked a major milestone in the project.

2. Third Research Methodology Workshop (RMW3): 10-12 September 2025

Dr Sabharwal, along with the NIEPA team, Ms Sejjal and Ms Chandrika, coordinated and organised the participation of the State Research Team for the Third Research Methodology Workshop, which included sending formal invitations, liaising with team, and arranging their accommodation.

On 10 September, Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart joined Dr Sabharwal at NIEPA for a planning session for RMW3. Professor Shashikala Wanjari, Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, welcomed Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart to NIEPA. The workshop took place at NIEPA over two days, 11-12 September. The workshop was attended by four of the State Research Teams, Assam (Professor Polly Vauqueline, Dr Bornali Borah, Dr Chitrangkita Gayan), Haryana (Professor Rajeshwari, Dr Kanwaljeet Viridi), Kerala (Professor Abdul Gafoor K, Dr Manoj Praveen G, Dr Ashkarali P), Maharashtra (Dr Krutika Kandare, Dr Vishnu Patil, with apologies from Professor Dhanashri Mahajan). Unfortunately, the Chhattisgarh team could not travel due to mass cancellation of flights due to poor weather conditions.

On 11 September, Dr Sabharwal welcomed the attendees and facilitated a round of introductions. She ran through the process that the WAHEI project had followed hitherto. Prof Henderson then provided an overview of the objectives of the workshop and the programme for the two-day workshop to follow. The objectives were as follows:

- To engage in peer review of SRTs' chapters and establish the key findings of the study with particular reference to Chapter 5.
- To move towards inter-state comparative analysis/synthesis analysis (national picture) as a team (Chapters 5 & 7).
- To establish the key findings of the study as a whole according to SRTs (Chapter 7).
- To further the work on and shared understanding of the Professional Learning Module.

The overview included a round of applause and congratulations for the hard work of the teams for producing the state reports and to Ms S. Arokia Mary for reviewing the draft work along with Prof Henderson.



Figure 1: Introduction session for RMW3

Professor Kumar Suresh, Dean (Academics & Research) delivered a welcome address, which included discussing the importance of the role of FMs in HE outreach. The address emphasised the need for a module such as the one we have developed.

To conclude the introductory session, Prof Stewart delivered a formal vote of thanks to the research teams, to Professor Suresh, NIEPA Administration for support with the project and the event, to the VC Professor Shashikala Wanjari.

The workshop then moved to a session where each team had reviewed and prepared a presentation on a different team's report chapter. The selected chapter was Chapter 5, 'ILs, FMs and HE Outreach: Practices and Perspectives'. This was selected due to this chapter having the greatest focus on HE outreach. The presentation included highlighting key findings of the team's chapter and comparative comments with the team's own chapter, and any comments for revisions of the chapter. Summaries of key points from the presentations are included below.

2.1 Kerala Team presentation on Haryana Chapter 5.

The presenters highlighted the inclusion of discussion of community outreach in the Haryana report, and also the inclusion of a women's college but the lack of women FMs (faculty members) in the college. There may be more outreach activities occurring in Haryana. FMs may be perceiving a higher level of comfort for rural students in accessing the HEIs. Haryana SU (state university) – outreach activities may not be so proactive, but even this may be more active than Kerala FMs. GCs (government colleges) were more

proactive in Haryana than in Kerala. It was noteworthy that colleges in Haryana are engaging in advertising campaigns. Systematic coordination between IL (Institutional Leader) and FMs of e.g. school visits was in evidence. SU Haryana showed a prevalence of individual efforts by FMs. The gender issues related to HE choice mentioned in Haryana were not mentioned in



Figure 2: Kerala team's presentation on Haryana Chapter 5

Kerala. FMs felt it was a *personal capacity but a professional responsibility* to conduct HE outreach. Online admissions is a barrier for rural students. FMs feel that there is an urban fascination for Haryana young people which is less evident in Kerala (in Kerala migration to other states or countries is more common). Commutability is an issue in both states. School students may not be aware of subjects offered in HE. Some perceptions of negative perspectives on HE, which were not deemed to be an issue in Kerala.

2.2 Maharashtra Team presentation of Assam Chapter 5.

The team found that, in Assam, rural students are perceived by FMs to find the HEIs (higher education institutions) comfortable. There may be low awareness of HE outreach by SUs. For the SU, promotional activities are not seen as necessary due to high demand. Choice of course is the prominent advice given by FMs, followed by employability prospects. Where colleges are the only choice in the area, this is therefore the only option, but this at least provides access for women students/rural students. There were elaborate practices including school visit programmes from colleges. Presence of outreach was discerned for 9th and 10th class students as well as older students. Similar challenges to other states were cited, such as lack of funds, some lack of awareness of the issues students may face. FMs at GCs may be more active than SUs. Similarities were found between Assam and



Figure 3: Maharashtra team's presentation on Assam Chapter 5

Maharashtra. Differences included that GCs conducted promotional activities in an organised manner in Assam, also involvement of office staff in HE outreach was present in Assam.

2.3 Assam Team presentation of Kerala Chapter 5.

Some findings were presented that rural students feel comfortable in HEIs. Some issues were mentioned such as poor infrastructure and reliance on cybercafe staff for admissions assistance, as well as long commute. Admissions information is communicated through a nodal officer, which may create a disconnect with students. Diary data revealed a majority of entries were from a personal capacity rather than professional duty. Challenges to engaging with HE outreach include insufficient funding, workload, disconnect with local communities. Opportunities may be the SU engaging in more publicity, visits to schools, and GCs engaging in community-level orientation programmes and relieving FMs of administrative work. One difference elaborated was that there are applications to SU from students residing in remote areas. In GCs there are subsidised lunch allowances in Kerala. Causes of limited HE outreach may be different between Kerala and Assam for SUs, e.g. centralised admissions processes in Kerala.



Figure 4: Assam team's presentation on Kerala Chapter 5

2.4 Haryana Team presentation of Maharashtra Chapter 5.

The presenters included ILs' perspectives on facilitating access to HE included financial support, promoting awareness, and so on. The SU engaged in limited structured guidance, ranging to more active approaches in SUs. Guidance by FMs was often in personal networks. The diary study highlighted activities such as financial support, outreach through NSS (National Service Scheme) camps. Challenges for future outreach includes funding and workload, lack of hostel facilities; early marriage and low parental awareness are also mentioned. It is considered that more visibility of HEIs would be

beneficial. There were questions about whether guidance was considered as career counselling in the context and how HE outreach could potentially be brought into the idea of career counselling, and the reverse. In terms of challenges, in Haryana funding was considered more of a dominant challenge, and in Maharashtra workload was selected.



Figure 5: Haryana team's presentation on Maharashtra Chapter 5

All in all the presentations were rich and stimulating, and all teams engaged in a lively discussion of the inter-state comparisons that the activity had brought about.



Figure 6: Dr Sabharwal and Prof Henderson presentation of Chapter 5 synthesis findings

After lunch, Dr Sabharwal and Prof Henderson delivered a substantial presentation which was the inaugural showcasing of the national picture derived from the synthesising of the full sample from five states. The presentation was again based on Chapter 5 and included survey, interview and diary data. Many of the similar trends emerged that had been discussed in the morning session, but

were then confirmed in the whole-study findings. There was a Q&A session with workshop participants after the presentation, which included questions such as issues of misinformation as well as lack of information; whether 'enhancing rural student enrolment' could be added to the redeployment criteria for College Principals to incentivise HE outreach; whether study findings would still be relevant in such a fast-changing sector (it was agreed that there were findings that had enduring relevance); how the sizeable data set was being handled for the synthesis work.

Following this, a set of tables was distributed to the workshop participants for a groupwork exercise. The tables were based on the whole-study survey data and were freshly prepared for the workshop to enable the participants to engage in new analysis together. Key variables from the study (e.g. types of HE advice given by FMs) were displayed as disaggregated variables by: gender, urban/rural residence, social group. Each group analysed their tables and then presented the findings. It was agreed that in fact the analysis had shown limited variations in the



Figure 7: Presentation of group work in RMW3



Figure 8: Group work session in RMW3

findings from the disaggregation, though some interesting patterns emerged, such as more FMs from OBC and SC groups giving advice in the SU than non-OBC/SC FMs.



Figure 7: Introduction to day 2 of RMW3

The second day of RMW3 began with each team presenting key findings from the two most relevant sections of Chapter 6 of the report, 'Who are the students and what is their experience of and perspectives on HE outreach?'. The selected sections focused on undergraduate students' experiences of and views on HE outreach, to accord with the discussions of the equivalent topics the

previous day. Highlights of the presentations are below.

2.5 Haryana presentation highlights

- 12% of SU UGs had experienced FM involvement in their HE choices; 4% in GCID.
- A high proportion of students said rural students would feel comfortable choosing the college and more than 50% for both SU and GCID believed that the HEIs were conducting activities to attract rural students.
- Digital exclusion is particularly an issue for GC students.
- HE choices for GC students are based on peer group interaction, neighbours, relatives, college visit.
- For SU students, choices were formed by social media information.
- Guidance regarding entrance exam, campus safety (women students), transport, financial aid were suggested as necessary options by students.
- In the Q&A, it was raised that EWS often may not know about their status, as historically the 'General' group students were not able to avail of reservations.
- It was also discussed that if a school has NCC, it is likely that students may select a college that also hosts NCC, and the NCC certificate then has benefits in the job market, in terms of applying for jobs in the military. It may be a challenge for colleges to gain NCC status (e.g. 10 year waiting period for one college). Some colleges have girls NCC units – these are less common. Having an NCC certificate also carries points in recruitment of FMs.
- Discussing how FMs' perceptions match with UG perceptions, it is clear that FMs are advising young people who are not in these colleges.



Figure 8: Haryana team presentation of Chapter 6

2.6 Assam presentation highlights

- 5.8% of SU UGs had experienced FM involvement in their HE choices; 17% in GCID.
- FMs visit schools for recruitment purposes of new courses; there was an example of a student who met an FM at a school visit and then the student persuaded his family to allow him to enrol.
- SU – majority of students felt that the campus is rural-student friendly due to a friendly, inclusive environment, FMs being approachable; UGs said the reservation policy is followed strictly at the SU.
- SU UGs suggested improvements need in terms of publicity methods, employability information and scholarships, more collaborations with local schools, more excursions/NCC programmes.
- SU UGs suggested other activities that other HEIs are doing included educational camps, FM visits, guaranteeing placements in the job market (a practice conducted by private HEIs).
- GCID UGs felt there needs to be more guidance on admissions. A suggestion was to have more parent-teacher interactions in colleges (as per the cell guidelines).
- Importance of alumni association was noted in the SU as was the presence of the college website (students may not access newspapers).
- In the Q&A it was discussed that there are strong student union bodies and strong alumni associations which is why prospective students are aware of the approachability of FMs and so on.
- There was discussion of the Samarth system, which includes admissions, FM data and so on and even early education data (via the 'Apar-ID' created by schools) – this is a national system which is in the process of being rolled out.



Figure 9: Assam team presentation of Chapter 6

This system is creating some issues with exclusion at admissions stage due to the need for digital access to the system, also due to name changes for women who change their name during marriage, also due to providing the phone number of the cybercafe.

2.7 Kerala presentation highlights

- 29.41% of SU UGs had experienced FM involvement in their HE choices; 8.77% in GCID.
- GCID students commented on proximity, affordability of college – not based on guidance.
- Types of guidance consulted particularly included online sources (SU), visiting college was highest for SU and GCID.
- SU students engaged in more pre-enrolment activities than GCID students.
- For the SU, the UGs noted a high level of comfort for UGs in selecting the HEI. For GCID students, this was much lower, with the reasons explained as low visibility of college assets, infrastructure/ facilities issues (hostel, transport and so on).



Figure 10: Kerala team presentation of Chapter 6

- Topics for guidance which was sought – GCID: higher emphasis on campus safety and employability; SU: application college selection.
- GCID UGs believe that activities are limited, which may be due to limited social media circulation.
- Other HEIs are perceived by SU UGs to engage in more activities e.g. high levels of marketing by private HEIs, direct calls, social media advertisements; alumni talks and campus tours (online) were also mentioned.
- GCID students mentioned that WhatsApp groups are used as helpdesks.

- Outreach improvements suggested by UGs included campus visits, parental outreach via local organisations, social media use, infrastructure improvements, district-level programmes, peer-to-peer outreach.
- In the Q&A, there was discussion of whether the Kerala participants may have been more open to critique than other states, and if this creates a difference with other states in terms of representations.
- There was also a query about mismatch between the SU FMs' views and SU UGs' views such as comfort in relation to language background; there was a further discussion of whether the mismatch in perceptions across FMs and UGs was due to age or FM familiarity with PG classes.
- There was a question about whether the YouTube videos are giving accurate information and it was discussed that students are making videos as part of Media Studies courses and posting them online.

2.8 Maharashtra presentation highlights

- 20.25% of SU UGs had experienced FM involvement in their HE choices; 16.66% in GCID.
- A higher proportion of GCID students had visited the HEI before enrolment than SU students.
- Qualitative data – guidance was obtained from school teachers, tuition teachers, parents, a seminar organised by the college. There were also some workshops in schools organised by school teachers in class 12. Teachers had recommended to students to enrol in HE based on high marks in class. In one case, a FM supported a student financially.
- Advice was given on choice of course and campus safety across both HEIs. GCID had a higher prevalence of advice on whether to go for HE or not and choice of HEI.



Figure 11: Maharashtra team presentation of Chapter 6

- There was discussion about how HEI choice is based on the geography of the region, in terms of choosing a college that does not involve crossing areas with heavy traffic.
- For both HEIs, only around half of the students felt that the HEIs were conducting activities to attract rural students.
- There was a discussion concluding the presentation of nuances in UG decisions of individuals, based on their knowledge and perceptions, which may not be aligned with what may be expected.
- In the Q&A, there was discussion of how the Maharashtra system includes ‘junior colleges’ i.e. senior secondary schools, which are on the same site as colleges; this means that school students have easy access to colleges and higher likelihood of accessing FMs for guidance.
- Completion of or at least enrolment in HE is seen as important for young women in terms of marriage prospects, but attendance is low.

The afternoon session began with a group work activity where members of different State Research Teams were allocated to groups to discuss cross-state findings from Chapter 7, which is the chapter presenting the overarching findings and discussion of potential future suggestions for policy and practice. The teams then presented on the key ideas discussed.



Figure 12: Presentation of group discussions on Chapter 7

Highlights of the discussion included:

- Outreach should be included in HEIs’ policies.
- Sensitisation of ILs also needed for HE outreach significance, in order to then roll out HE outreach sensitisation in the HEI, leading to development of an HE outreach culture.

- FMs should be involved in all HE outreach stages, from planning to implementation, including incentives (e.g. flexibility in scheduling of classes, adjustment of workload), documenting and celebrating HE outreach cases, included in newsletters.
- FMs need to be trained and sensitised to HE outreach. A systematic professional development initiative is needed. Under-reached sectors in the community – sensitisation is needed. Adequate training is needed on course selection pathway, financial aid, reservation policy. Aptitude identification (counselling).
- FMs need to conduct surveys in rural areas to capture the viewpoints of local communities about HE options.
- A local, contextual approach to HE outreach is needed.
- Communication is needed and awareness of reservation policies, e.g. use of NGOs, local self-government, NSS; FMs cannot conduct HE outreach in isolation; they have to mobilise the community.
- HE outreach ambassador/coordinator role is needed in HEIs to coordinate with schools and departments.
- Include HE outreach in the list of topics for students' projects.
- HE outreach is needed to reach 50% enrolment for HE.
- Dedicated funds should be allocated for HE outreach. Funding for NGOs as well as HEIs.
- An HE outreach cell should be institutionalised in HEIs. With a coordinator and a trained FM, incentivised. Include at same status as IQSC. Cell needs to have access to data/information about local community so this can then be provided to FMs to doing outreach.
- HE outreach should be considered for NAAC/ranking criteria inclusion.
- HE outreach should be embedded as part of faculty workload, quality assurance mechanisms, institutional development plans, promotion criteria (CAS), API.
- HEIs need autonomy in deciding which outreach to engage in.
- Include HE outreach in mandatory faculty development programme.

- Include HE outreach in list of duties for FMs.
- School level policy – school interface programmes.
- Community outreach policy integration.
- Access to HE course – short courses provision could be considered.
- Funding needed for further HE outreach research. Linking of studies working in this area, creating a repository. Internship programme for students to contribute to HE outreach. Consider publications such as journals. Centre of excellence for outreach?
- Affiliating universities could coordinate colleges’ HE outreach activities through central NSS unit. OR central HE outreach unit.

The session then moved to a presentation by Prof Stewart on the development of the Professional Learning Module which had occurred since the UK visit to Warwick, where the module was co-developed. Prof Stewart showed the teams the tutor guide and other resources and explained that the module would be piloted the following week by Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Viridi. Prof Henderson then explained the research evaluation process that was to be conducted of the module and displayed the instruments; the process includes a pre- and post-module questionnaire, module observation, post-module diary for three months, post-diary interview. The workshop concluded with a round of final comments, which included many positive feedback remarks about the project from core and state team members.



Figure 13: RMW3 attendees signing 'W' for WAHEI

3. Module Pilot and return to the UK: 17-19 September 2025

Note: in order not to compromise the anonymity of module pilot evaluation participants, photos are not displayed of module participants' faces or names in the below section.

In preparation for the Module Meeting and the University of Warwick team's arrival, Dr Sabharwal, along with Professor Rajeshwari (WAHEI-Project Lead, Haryana) and the



Figure 14: Module pilot preparation

NIEPA-WAHEI team - Ms Sejjal and Ms Chandika, undertook comprehensive organisational work to ensure all arrangements for the Module Meeting were completed in advance. This meticulous preparation included, first, identifying faculty members from various government colleges in

Haryana; coordinating with participants; arranging accommodation; and issuing official letters, ensuring that all logistical aspects were in place before the visit and the meeting. This was in addition to the substantial academic inputs that went into the preparation of the module content.

On 17 September, Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart met with Dr Sabharwal at NIEPA for a final planning session for the module pilot. They were joined in the afternoon by Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Viridi who would be conducting the module, to agree the process.



Figure 15: Module pilot introduction session

On 18 September, 12 faculty members from different districts and colleges of Haryana attended the module session. The day began with an introduction from Dr Sabharwal and Prof Stewart, welcome speech from Professor Suresh, welcome from Professor

Rajeshwari, vote of thanks from Prof Henderson and a round of introductions from the module participants.

Many of the participants highlighted that they were working in rural colleges with different constituencies. Some FMs were based on women's colleges, there was also a FM from a Muslim majority college as well as others from colleges where most students were from labouring families. Some colleges were mixed rural/urban. One, in Gurugram, was more urban and included families who had moved to the area generations ago. There was also mention of migrant families where young people need to work to sustain families. Some of the challenges highlighted including issues facing young women regarding transport, issues of students being used to 'cramming' rather than thinking as such, attendance is an issue; the shortage of FMs was mentioned (e.g. 1 FM for one subject area). HE choice was raised in terms of students' concerns about what to choose and how to choose.

Prof Henderson then introduced the research evaluation component and talked through the PIL and process and facilitated the completion of the pre-module questionnaire and consent form. During the module pilot, Prof Henderson along with Ms Sejjal and Ms Arushi Painuly observed the process and took notes on the learnings that occurred.

The module was conducted by Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Viridi. Prof Stewart, Prof Henderson and Dr Sabharwal observed the sessions but did not take part. The module was conducted over three hours with a 15-minute break in the middle. Prof Rajeshwari took overall responsibility for conducting the first half with Dr Viridi assisting. Dr Viridi took responsibility for conducting the second half with Professor Rajeshwari assisting.

The module was conducted through a number of sessions which covered the various elements of the module. Each session involved a contribution by the tutors and activities undertaken by participants. The room has been organised to enable the participants to work in three groups of four participants. Each group exercise was contained within the module pack which had been prepared in advance. The tutors guided the participants to the relevant exercise in their packs. The tutors made excellent use of the screen in the room to display the tasks needed for each exercise to make the objectives of each

exercise clear. The tutors also use the screen to good effect in the tutor led sessions by displaying the key information they were conveying. The tutors actively engaged with the participants during the group activities to ensure that all participated and that the topics were covered and noted by the groups appropriately. They also made sure that the time allocated for each session was adhered to.

The discussions from each of the groups were observed to enable the tutors and the project team as a whole to evaluate how learning was taking place. These observations were conducted by Prof Henderson, Ms Sejjal and Ms Painuly.

The module concluded with a short quiz which sought to capture the learning experiences of the participants, and the distribution of the module manual containing more information about HE outreach to all the participants.

It was very clear that Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Viridi had built a good rapport with the participants during the conduct of the module and that participants had found the experience enjoyable as well as instructive. Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Viridi expressed their pleasure in conducting the module, which was a product of the collective



Figure 16: Module delivery

work undertaken by State Research Team members during the UK research visit in June 2025.

After lunch, Prof Henderson facilitated the completion of the post-module questionnaire and introduced the diary study. Final remarks were shared and the participants departed. A debrief was held and it was agreed the module had been a great success.

Finally, Dr Sabharwal, Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart met to discuss the final phase of the project and to plan next steps, before returning to the UK on 19 September.

4. Additional visits by Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart

4.1 Visit to O. P. Jindal Global University, Haryana: 5-9 September 2025

On 8-9 September, Prof Henderson visited O. P. Jindal Global University (JGU) as part of an ongoing collaboration, where Prof Henderson is a member of the International Advisory Council of the IDEAS Office, the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, which is headed by Prof Deepanshu Mohan. On 8 September, Prof Henderson was welcomed by Ms Nasima Sultana Choudhury (Deputy Manager, Executive Team) and subsequently joined by Mr Najam Us Saqib (Assistant Director and Co-lead, Grassroots Action Program) and then Prof Mohan, for a cordial breakfast. Following this, Prof Mohan and Mr Saqib met with Prof Henderson and updated her on the current progress and developments with the IDEAS Hub. This included developments of new teaching provision and a move towards personnel being employed within IDEAS.

Opportunities for further collaboration were discussed such as Prof Henderson continuing with mentoring the Grassroots Action Program (GAP) research team and future contributions such as the Methods Winter School and Development Studies Masterclass. Following this meeting, in addition to further informal meetings with IDEAS staff members, Prof Henderson met with Ms Arushi Painuly, former Project Consultant at NIEPA for the WAHEI Project, who is now enrolled in the PhD Programme at JGU. The meeting focused on Ms Painuly's PhD progress and updates from the WAHEI Project. Prof Henderson also met with Dr Manika Bora, Assistant Professor in Economics in the Law School at JGU, as part of an ongoing collaboration.

On 9 September, Prof Henderson returned to JGU for a day of activities. The day began with Prof Henderson being welcomed by Mr Nirmal Lather (Social Media and Design Lead, IDEAS). Prof Henderson was invited to join the IDEAS Faculty Meeting to learn more about the faculty members in the Hub. After a round of introductions, Prof Henderson



Figure 17: Prof Henderson with the Dean of IDEAS and IDEAS faculty

introduced her research, focusing on the FCF projects. A discussion ensued, with faculty members asking insightful questions including the role of private colleges, the role of middle persons in facilitating access to HE, how aspiration feeds into HE choice, and how HE access links with participation and outcomes. Prof Mohan concluded the interaction with a summary of the previously discussed opportunities for further collaboration. Following this, Prof Henderson met with Ms Tahiba Banu (Lecturer, IDEAS), Mr Saqib and Ms Nasima, members of the newly constituted GAP Research Team for Phase 2 of the project. Prof Henderson was mentoring the previous team, of which Ms Banu was a member, and the meeting provided an opportunity to discuss plans for Phase 2 of the ongoing study of education and other aspects of the Bawana area in Delhi. Prof Henderson was then hosted for lunch by Dr Bora, Dr Divya Gupta (Associate Professor, Law School) and Ms Banu, for a discussion of Phase 1 of the Bavana study. Following this, Prof Henderson was given the valuable opportunity to attend Dr Bora's class on Feminist Economics, to experience the teaching and learning environment at JGU.

4.2 Assam and Odisha Visits: 13-16 September 2025

After a rest day on 13 September, on 14 September Prof Henderson and Prof Stewart travelled to Assam and Odisha, respectively, both returning on 16 September.

Assam Visit

Prof Henderson visited the WAHEI Project State Research Team from Assam, namely Professor Vauqueline and Dr Borah from Gauhati University and Dr Gayan from Rupahi College. The objective of the visit was to become familiar with the research context of the Assam state team, and to showcase the WAHEI work. On 14 September Prof Henderson was welcomed by Dr Borah and the schedule and presentation for the next day were finalised. On 15 September, Dr Borah and Prof Henderson travelled to Rupahi College, a rural college situated c. 140km from Guwahati, where Dr



Figure 18: Prof Henderson and Dr Borah Lecture

Gayan is based. Dr Gayan greeted the visitors along with Dr Julfair Mazid Kazi and

accompanied them to the Principal's office for introductions and a welcome tea. The Principal, Dr Monoj Kumar Nath, warmly welcomed the visitors to the College.

Prof Henderson and Dr Borah then proceeded to the hall for the presentation programme which had been organised by the IQAC (Internal Quality Assurance Cell), headed by Dr



Figure 19: Attendees of the WAHEI talk at Rupahi College

Gayan, as the inaugural programme of the new iteration of the IQAC. 37 faculty members and 110 students attended. The programme began with warm welcomes from Principal Monoj Kumar Nath, Vice Principal Moinamoni Devi, and faculty members Munmi Barman and Nafisa Ahmed, felicitation of the visitors and presentation of tokens of

appreciation as per local custom. Following this, Prof Henderson and Dr Borah co-presented a lecture on the WAHEI Project. This covered the background and rationale for the project, the design, key findings including from the Assam context, and implications. The lecture was a blended presentation in English and Asomiya/Assamese to ensure full accessibility for students. Following the lecture, Dr Gayan joined the speakers on the stage and a lively discussion ensued where several students asked a range of questions about the topic of widening access to HE.

The IQAC then proceeded to host a generous lunch and the visitors returned to the Principal's office for further interactions and formalities with faculty members. The visit concluded with warm thanks on all sides and Dr Borah and Prof Henderson returned to Guwahati.



Figure 20: The Principal, faculty members and invited guests at Rupahi College



Figure 213: Prof Henderson invited lecture at Women's Studies Department, Gauhati University

The following day, Prof Henderson was invited to Gauhati University by Professor Vauqueline and Dr Borah to experience the state university context. Professor Vauqueline and Prof Henderson met for an initial discussion about the project and the potential for future developments of the project in the North East region. Dr Borah joined for lunch and further discussion. Professor Vauqueline led a tour of some of the campus buildings, including where professional development activities are conducted. Prof Henderson was then shown to the Women's Studies Department where Professor Vauqueline is based, and where Prof Henderson was to deliver an invited lecture. The lecture was attended by nine faculty members, two research officers, six research scholars and 28 students from MA 1st and 3rd semester and the PhD programme. Prof Henderson was welcomed by Professor Vauqueline and the HoD, Prof Alpana Borgohain, and introduced by Ms Prayashi Goswami. The lecture, which was entitled

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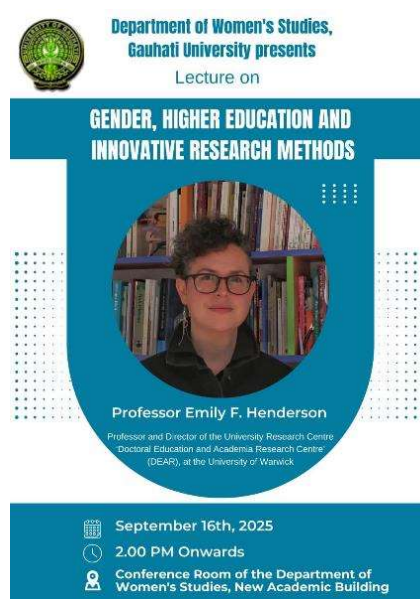


Figure 24: Poster for Prof Henderson talk at Gauhati University



Figure 25: Prof Vauqueline introducing Prof Henderson's talk at Gauhati University

'Gender, higher education and innovative research methods', covered two topics: gendered spatial constraints of access to HE (from the first FCF project) and an introduction to diary method, which was requested by Professor Vauqueline. A Q&A session ensued with lively discussions of the potential to use diary method in India. Professor Vauqueline and Dr Borah interjected with their experiences of using

diary method in the WAHEI Project. The day concluded with a tea hosted in the HoD's office and Prof Henderson returned to Delhi.

National Law University, Odisha Visit

Prof Stewart visited the National Law University (NLUO) in Cuttack, Odisha from 14-16th September. Warwick Law School and NLUO have a long-standing relationship which has involved a joint research project (Prof Ann Stewart and Prof Ved Kumari, VC of NLUO) focusing on the challenges faced by 'high tariff' law faculties in pursuing their commitment to widening access to higher education and a Warwick Law School-funded visiting research fellowship scheme enabling a number of NLUO staff to spend time at Warwick.



Figure 22: Prof Stewart with Prof Ved Kumari (Vice Chancellor of NLUO) and Prof Argyalopa Mishra (NLUO)

On her first day at NLUO Prof Stewart made a presentation to students on postgraduate study in the UK and in particular on undertaking the Masters in Law at Warwick University. She also gave a guest lecture to students on her research relating to gender and ageing, which resulted in a lively interaction between Prof Stewart and the students on the nature of age discrimination. She also had the opportunity to meet with various members of staff, particularly those who had been visiting fellows at Warwick Law School.



Figure 23: Prof Stewart with NLUO Faculty Members

On the following day Ann joined a Masters class on the module Gender and the Law. Students were presenting their work on two specific topics - surrogacy and the decriminalisation of same sex relationships. Prof Stewart contributed to the discussions on both topics, adding her experience of teaching these topics to students on undergraduate and postgraduate gender and law modules in the UK. She continued her discussions with individual members of staff and in the afternoon made a presentation at a faculty staff seminar on the challenges of internationalisation within HEIs. The session was conducted via a question and answer format and covered international research funding and partnerships as well as possibilities for student exchanges and forms of teaching collaboration. Ann used the Fair Chance Foundation research projects (the 5-year FCF project in Haryana and the present 4-year WAHEI project) as examples of how to develop, fund and conduct an international interdisciplinary project. After the seminar, Prof Stewart was included in an event organised by the students to celebrate (belatedly) teachers day.

5. Conclusion

The visit was highly successful in terms of furthering the SRTs' work in finalising their reports and the team collectively moving towards national-level findings. Secondly in terms of the piloting of the module, which worked well in the first instance. Thirdly in terms of developing potential for future collaboration with SRTs and other institutions. Next steps include finalising the module once the evaluation is complete, finalising the state reports, working on the synthesis report, drafting a report based on the module piloting evaluation, drafting a policy brief and working towards the Policy Conference.