

Report on:

Visit of Postgraduate Students from the University of Antwerp, Belgium, to St. Xavier's College, Ranchi under the USOS Programme

1. Introduction

As part of the academic collaboration established under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between St. Xavier's College, Ranchi and the Institute of Development Policy (IOB), University of Antwerp, Belgium, a group of nine postgraduate students from the University of Antwerp visited St. Xavier's College under the USOS (University Foundation for Development Cooperation) Programme. The visit was organized as an international academic and cultural exchange initiative aimed at promoting collaborative learning, intercultural understanding, and research engagement on issues of sustainable development.

The visit provided an excellent opportunity for meaningful interaction between the visiting students and the faculty members and students of St. Xavier's College, thereby strengthening the academic partnership between the two institutions.

2. Objectives of the Visit

The visit was organized with the following objectives:

- To promote academic collaboration under the MoU between the two institutions.
- To provide international exposure to students through academic and cultural interactions.
- To facilitate field-based learning on the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- To understand the socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and developmental realities of Jharkhand, particularly among Adivasi communities.
- To encourage collaborative learning and the exchange of ideas on sustainable development and inclusive growth.

3. Academic Engagement

The visiting postgraduate students were undertaking project-based academic research related to various dimensions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rather than limiting their work to theoretical study, the students engaged directly with local communities, institutions, and stakeholders to understand how sustainable development initiatives are implemented at the grassroots level.

Their academic projects focused on understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable development within the unique socio-cultural context of Jharkhand.

Among the research themes undertaken by the visiting students were:

- **Understanding the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level**, with emphasis on governance, community participation, and sustainable development practices.
- **Examining structural inequalities experienced by Adivasi communities**, particularly how educational systems reproduce social disadvantage and how Adivasi students, teachers, and community members respond to these challenges.
- **Assessing women's participation in disaster risk governance in Ranchi**, focusing on gender-inclusive approaches to disaster preparedness, resilience, and community-based governance.
- Other interdisciplinary projects addressing environmental sustainability, community development, governance, and social inclusion within the broader SDG framework.

The visit enabled the students to collect field-based insights through interactions with local communities, faculty members, students, and institutional stakeholders.

4. Interaction at St. Xavier's College

During their stay, the visiting students interacted extensively with the faculty members and students of St. Xavier's College. Academic discussions, presentations, and informal interactions facilitated the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on development issues.

Special emphasis was placed on understanding:

- The educational and developmental initiatives undertaken by St. Xavier's College.
- The history and engagement of the institution with Adivasi communities.
- Community outreach programmes and extension activities.
- Local perspectives on sustainable development and environmental conservation.

These interactions enriched the learning experience of both the visiting students and the host institution.

5. Coordination and Facilitation

The visiting delegation was accompanied by **Mr. Daanish Naithani, USOS India Coordinator**, and **Ms. Florence Van Durme**, who coordinated and facilitated the academic, institutional, and field engagements throughout the visit.

Their guidance ensured effective communication between the visiting students and the host institution and contributed significantly to achieving the objectives of the USOS Programme.

Their efforts also strengthened institutional cooperation and laid the foundation for future collaborative academic initiatives.

6. Outcomes of the Visit

The visit yielded several important outcomes:

- Strengthened the academic partnership between St. Xavier's College, Ranchi and the University of Antwerp.
- Promoted internationalization through faculty and student interaction.
- Enhanced understanding of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals within the local context of Jharkhand.
- Facilitated cross-cultural learning and appreciation of the socio-cultural diversity of Adivasi communities.
- Generated opportunities for collaborative research, student exchange, internships, and future academic cooperation under the USOS Programme.
- Increased awareness among students of both institutions regarding global development challenges and locally relevant sustainable development practices.

List of Visiting Students from the University of Antwerp, Belgium

Sl. No.	Name	Degree Programme	Research Theme
1	Hajar El Harrak Samadi	Master in Business Economics	Local implementation of the SDGs
2	Daniel Alejandro Bonilla Gutierrez	Advanced Master in Development Evaluation (IOB)	Education and structural disadvantage among Adivasi communities
3	Sara Zoghbi	Advanced Master in Development Evaluation and Management (IOB)	Women's participation in disaster risk governance



Postgraduate students from the University of Antwerp presenting their research projects on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and engaging in academic discussions with faculty members and students of St. Xavier's College, Ranchi



Interactive session featuring discussions on sustainable development, community engagement, and field-based research in Jharkhand between the visiting Belgian postgraduate students and the academic community of St. Xavier's College, Ranchi



Interactive session featuring discussions on sustainable development, community engagement, and field-based research in Jharkhand between the visiting Belgian postgraduate students and the academic community of St. Xavier's College, Ranchi



Group photograph of the postgraduate students from the University of Antwerp, Belgium, with Dr. Fr. Robert Pradeep Kujur, S.J., Principal, faculty members of St. Xavier's College,

Ranchi, and the USOS coordinating team, commemorating the successful academic exchange programme under the institutional MoU

7. Conclusion

The visit of the nine postgraduate students from the University of Antwerp, Belgium, under the USOS Programme, marked another significant milestone in the successful implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two institutions. Through academic discussions, field visits, and interaction with the faculty and students of St. Xavier's College, the visiting scholars gained valuable insights into the socio-economic and environmental realities of Jharkhand and the role of local institutions in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The programme not only strengthened international academic collaboration but also reinforced the shared commitment of both institutions towards promoting inclusive, sustainable, and community-oriented higher education. The visit is expected to pave the way for continued academic exchanges, joint research initiatives, and long-term institutional cooperation between St. Xavier's College, Ranchi and the University of Antwerp, Belgium.