

Don't Give Me Charity, Give Me a Chance says, Crisys

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A hi-tech NGO uses technology to improve the lives of tribal population, creating a win-win model that benefits *adivasis* and the society

Ravi Waghmare, a serious-minded tribal youth from Maharashtra, wanted to be a teacher. But government posts in the taluka were auctioned to the highest bidder and he did not possess the ability, or the confidence, to work in the city. Today, this diploma-holder in education works as a diver for an illegal sand-dredging operation which reduces his life expectancy by 10-20 years; it could also lead to blindness, hearing loss or paralysis.

Adivasis or 'indigenous tribes' are at the threshold of change. With depleting forests, on the one hand, and increasing influence of mass media and development on the other, they find

themselves the crossroads: they cannot sustain their traditional lifestyle and are also unable to benefit from India's growth economy. That is where Crisys steps in.

Crisys is a registered non-profit company based in Thane (Maharashtra). Its vision is to create a connected, abundant and responsible society through technology. Its name is an acronym for 'Creative Responsible Integrated Systems' and it is developing innovative solutions for the development of indigenous tribes.

Crisys is the brainchild of Glenn Fernandes, a visionary technologist, who worked in Siemens India Ltd for 20 years before he quit his job to dedicate his life to social work. He has been joined by an able and dedicated team of software and electronics engineers, medical practitioners, bio-technologists, professionals in sustainable development & management and volunteers from Germany and Austria.

Its flagship project 'PACT' (pratigya apprenticeship for community transformation) provides free training to *adivasi* youth in fields like IT, healthcare, education and agriculture. They use these skills in two ways: firstly, to work in development projects for their own communities; secondly, to undertake external projects that provide professional work experience and help generate funds for their monthly stipends and salaries. For instance, IT apprentices work part-time in developing educational multimedia for *adivasis*, and part-time in 'Jungle BPOs' doing 3D modelling, animation, data processing, software maintenance and other IT jobs under professional supervision. The infrastructure and equipment set-up is financed by Crisys.

Crisys is developing similar programmes in agriculture and industry aimed at providing training and livelihood in situ, in the *adivasi* villages. This would reduce migration to cities, give opportunities to women and help develop backward areas, without imposing any burden on the society.

Another innovative project is the 'rapid remote kit' (R3) developed by Crisys to provide immediate medical relief in remote areas, with no roads or ambulances. It comprises (1) mono-wheel ambulance that can traverse rough, rocky terrain (2) portable low/no-power respirators (3) snakebite relief measures such as humane snake trap, leg gaitors or coverings and first-aid medication.

R3 kits are distributed free of cost in snakebite-affected areas as part of its 'snakeathon' project. Funds are generated from Crisys Software and IT projects as well as corporate and individual sponsorships. Crisys had also filed a PIL (public interest litigation) in the Bombay High Court about government action to help reduce deaths due to snakebite. In October 2014, the court asked the Maharashtra government to examine its research and to consider the feasibility of promulgating an Emergency Medical Services Act, on the lines of such legislation in Gujarat.

Crisys is an NGO with a difference. It provides a platform for connecting marginalised population with mainstream society.

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