



International Conference on



“GDP \neq Happiness: Rethinking Development Through Citizens’ Wellbeing”

08th – 09th April 2026

Jointly organised by

The Department of Arts, (KLEF) and the Center for Field Learning

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Department of Arts, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF), Vijayawada, in association with the Centre for Field Learning, successfully organized a two-day International Conference titled “*GDP \neq Happiness: Rethinking Development Through Citizens’ Wellbeing*” on 8th and 9th April 2026. The conference aimed to critically examine the limitations of GDP as the sole indicator of development and to promote a more holistic and human-centric approach focusing on citizens’ wellbeing, happiness, and quality of life. The event witnessed active participation from academicians, researchers, and students across reputed institutions in India and abroad.

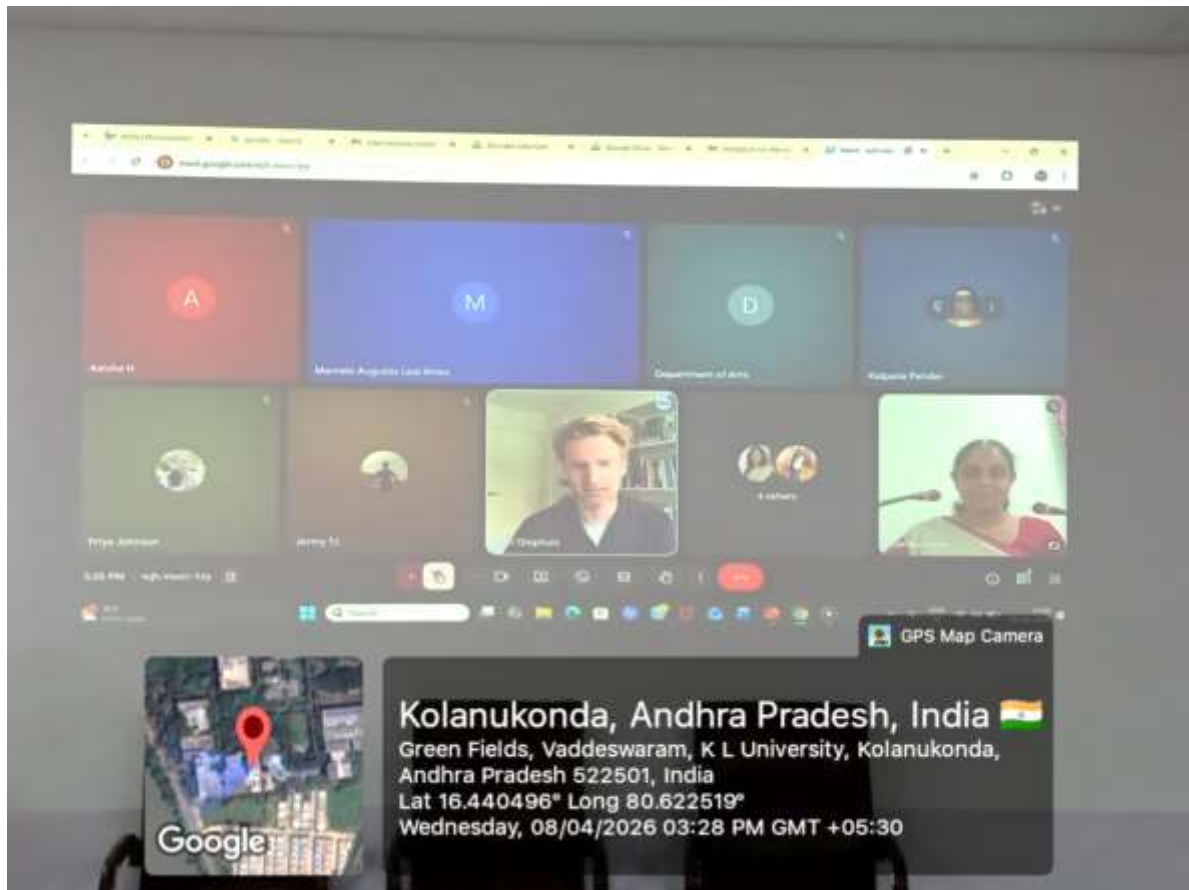
The inaugural session commenced at 10:00 AM on 8th April 2026 with the formal welcome of dignitaries, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp and Saraswati Vandana. Distinguished industry leader Cherukuri Kutumba Rao graced the occasion as Chief Guest, bringing valuable insights from his work in advancing inclusive growth through the P4 (Public–Private–People Partnership) initiative. Moreover, he highlighted the relevance of rethinking development paradigms in contemporary socio-economic contexts. At the heart of the discussions was a powerful realization: Happiness cannot be fully quantified. It lives in relationships, community bonds, purpose, and a sense of belonging elements that no economic model can entirely measure. The session also featured a keynote address delivered by Prof. Alka Parikh, Founder of center for field learning (CFFL), Ahmedabad, emphasizing the multidimensional nature of wellbeing and the need for interdisciplinary research. Furthermore, she reflected on global happiness rankings, where India currently stands at 116th position. The discussion turned toward nations like Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, and Netherlands consistently ranking among the happiest globally. A common thread emerged: these nations may have smaller populations, but they invest deeply in social trust, welfare systems, and quality of life. The comparison offered a gentle yet important insight: economic strength alone does not guarantee happiness; social harmony and human-centric policies play an equally vital role. The seminar also explored the paradox of modern progress.

Rapid technological advancement, evolving lifestyles, and widening inequalities have transformed societies in unprecedented ways. While these changes have unlocked opportunities, they have also highlighted a growing need to preserve what truly matters: human connection, empathy, and emotional well-being. The conference themes broadly

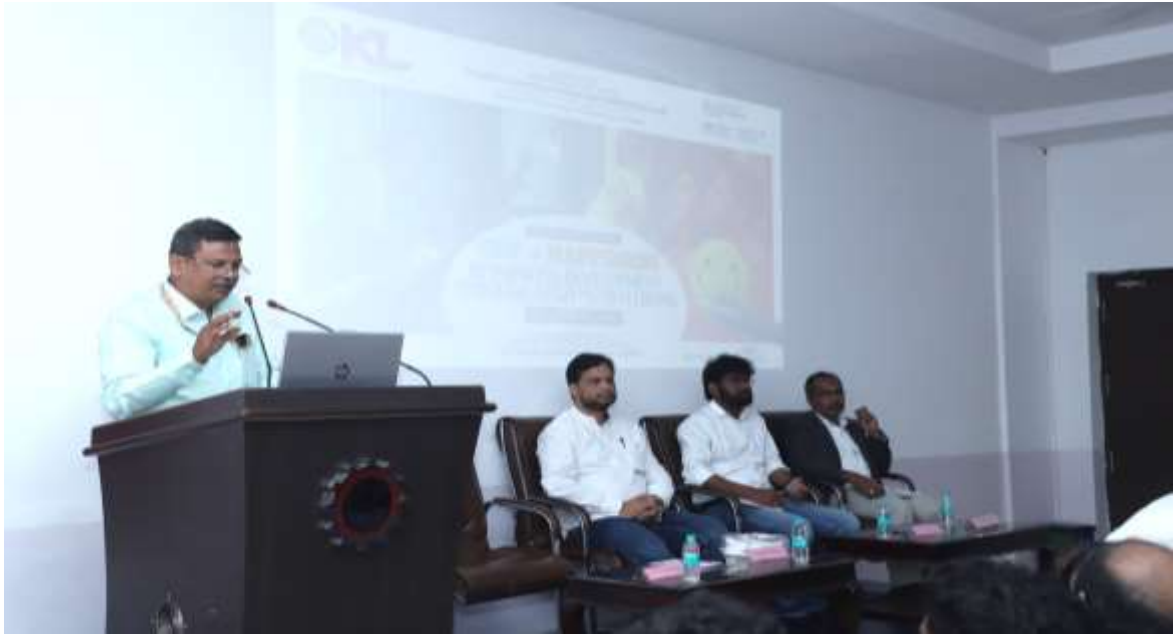
encompassed areas such as basic needs and life satisfaction, psychological security, gender and wellbeing, health services, age-related dynamics, social factors including caste and class, urban-rural disparities, and professional fulfilment. The discussions underscored the need to integrate these dimensions into policy frameworks for sustainable and inclusive development.



The technical sessions on Day 1 were structured around invited talks by eminent scholars. The first session featured four distinguished speakers from India who presented their research through online mode, each allocated 20 minutes. The second session included four international speakers who provided global perspectives on wellbeing, happiness indices, and development alternatives. These sessions facilitated rich academic exchange and comparative insights across different socio-economic contexts.



Day 2 of the conference was devoted to thematic discussions and invited talks. A panel discussion on “Rethinking Development and Wellbeing” brought together experts from various disciplines, encouraging dialogue on psychological, social, and economic determinants of life satisfaction. This was followed by a roundtable of invited speakers who further explored emerging research areas and methodological approaches in measuring wellbeing. The conference concluded with a valedictory session, including the presentation of the rapporteur’s report, and reflections by dignitaries.



The conference attracted participation from a diverse group of scholars. Notable participants included Dr. P. Umanadha Sharma (Department of Arts, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation), Ms. Vasanti Vasireddy (Business School, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation), Mr. Kallepally Prashanth (Kakatiya University, Telangana), Ms. Shwetha Nagarajan and Mr. Tom Abraham (St. Joseph's University, Bangalore), among others. Their research contributions reflected the interdisciplinary nature of the conference by addressing the gathering encouraged students to embrace innovation while maintaining balance and compassion in their lives.



The papers presented covered a wide range of themes aligned with the conference objectives. For instance, Ms. Vasanti Vasireddy presented on “*Cultivation of Virtue: The Key to Escaping Modern Dissatisfaction*,” exploring philosophical and behavioural dimensions of wellbeing. Mr. Kallepally Prashanth examined “*Urban-Rural Divides in Life Satisfaction*,” focusing on comparative socio-economic conditions. Similarly, Ms. Shwetha Nagarajan and Mr. Tom Abraham analyzed “*Life Satisfaction in Urban vs Rural Areas*,” contributing to the discourse on spatial inequalities in wellbeing. These studies highlighted the importance of factors such as social structure, cultural context, and psychological security in shaping life satisfaction.

A key outcome of the conference was the recognition that traditional economic indicators are insufficient to capture the complexities of human wellbeing. Participants emphasized the importance of field-based research, qualitative assessments, and participatory approaches in understanding life satisfaction. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference enabled meaningful dialogue between economists, sociologists, psychologists, and development practitioners.



The conference was well-organized, with efficient coordination, active engagement of participants, and smooth execution of sessions. The hospitality arrangements and academic environment contributed to the overall success of the event. The organizing committee, led by the Convener and Co-Conveners, played a crucial role in ensuring the effective conduct of the conference.

In the valedictory session, the International Conference on “*GDP ≠ Happiness*” successfully achieved its objective of fostering critical discourse on alternative measures of development. Dean (R&D) BTP Madhav emphasized the importance of happiness in shaping individuals more thoughtful and socially conscious. Adding to this perspective, K. Anil Kumar highlighted the critical relationship between governance, development, and human well-being in nurturing responsible leadership. It provided a valuable platform for researchers to present their work, exchange ideas, and explore new directions in wellbeing research.



The insights generated from the conference are expected to contribute to academic scholarship as well as policy formulation aimed at enhancing citizens' quality of life. As the conference concluded, it left behind more than insights. It left a question lingering in every mind: Can a nation truly be called developed if its people are not happy? Perhaps the real measure of progress lies not just in economic graphs, but in the everyday experiences of its people—their sense of purpose, their relationships, and their ability to live with dignity and contentment. Because in the end, the true wealth of a nation is not just what it produces, but how its people feel: A Thought to Carry Forward.