

## Inter College Women's Association

### ICWA

#### **The beginning:**

ICWA can trace its beginnings to an agitation carried out by teachers and students of women's colleges of Patna to provide justice to two university women.

It was 1987. Two university women were murdered by their husbands. While these murders caused sensation and outrage, shockingly the police remained by and large inactive. Moreover, despite reports and evidences to the contrary the case of Ragini Upadhyay was turned from a murder case into a suicide case. It was time for the women of Patna to come together. An Action Plan committee was formed with teachers of several women's Colleges of Patna. The agitation continued. After continued meetings, deliberations and protests the Committee achieved its goal. On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1987 the suicide case was withdrawn and a murder case was instituted against Ragini's husband. The Inter College Committee had done its work. It was decided that this committee formed to protest against the two murders would be made the nucleus of a new association.

#### **Goals and Objectives of this new association:**

- Friendliness and solidarity among the staff and students of various Women's Colleges of Patna.
- To work zealously and remain united for various women's issues
- To be ever ready for action in cases of atrocities perpetrated on women.
- To develop in young women students self-esteem, self-confidence, uprightness and leadership through inter college programmes of value clarification and intellectual and cultural activities.
- To create increasing awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of our social milieu, especially with regard to women .
- To reach out to and help the wider society of women and children.

Since the time of its inception ICWA has helped hundreds of women in distress in the form of marriage counselling, psychological counselling, legal aid, job placements financial aid and education.

## **Projects of ICWA:**

- I. College Project
- II. Special Homes Project
- III. Literacy Project
- IV. Low income Group Women's Project
- V. Social Support Project

### **I. The College Project:**

In order to fulfill its primary aims ICWA has organized several socio cultural athletic activities right from its inception.

They are:

- *Awareness Programmes*
- *Workshops*
- *Seminars*
- *Inter College Contests*
- *Sports Meets*

Social Awareness Seminars are a novel way of making the young women students conscious of social problems and their responsibilities in society. The target groups are the students of women's colleges of Patna.

ICWA has organized several Inter College cultural contests and sports meets. Impact of these Socio cultural Programmes and awareness sessions has been very salutary on young women students.

- They have developed leadership qualities.
- They have been oriented to reflect on and inculcate values of empowerment and self-reliance and they have been groomed to become responsible citizens.

- The programmes have showcased their talents, brought out their creativity and developed their self-confidence.

**Reaching out to wider society of women and children has been through:**

- a) *Special (remand) homes project*
- b) *Low income group women's project*
- c) *Social support project*

**II Special Homes or Remand Homes Project**

**The first project undertaken by ICWA was the After Care Home for Women in Patna.**

When the team visited the Women's Home for the first time on 20<sup>th</sup> of Feb. 1990 .Conditions were found to be hellish.

ICWA addressed the problems of –

- Health, Sanitation, Rehabilitation and Release.
- Later vocational Training was also included.
- ICWA team started weekly visits
- Reports were sent to the Welfare Secretary and later to Patna High Court.
- In 1993 Court formed a Remand Home Committee with Sister Carol as the chairperson and Mr. Ashok Priyadarshi, Legal Adviser of ICWA, as one of the members to look into matters pertaining to 22 Remand Homes of Bihar.

**Our Approach at Present:**

- Weekly visits to supervise, motivate and work with the residents. .
- An ICWA appointed trainer provides vocational training for 4 hours daily.
- Celebrations are held on special occasions
- Prayer and meditation are held regularly.
- Students are provided with coaching in order to prepare for Board Exams.
- Classes are held every day for all the inmates who study in lower classes

**ICWA conducts various activities to ensure health, and better living conditions such as**

- Regular health check-ups by doctors and nurses of Kurji Holy Family Hospital
- Awareness programmes on AIDS and other diseases are held.
- Prayers are held for peace
- Supervision by ICWA team is undertaken to maintain cleanliness and hygiene.
- Blankets, clothes and utensils are donated from time to time.
- Exhibition cum cultural programmes are held twice a year to encourage the residents and exhibit their handicraft.
- Due to continuous efforts made by us more than 1000 women residents have been released from the After Care Home.

**Special Home for Boys.**

- The ICWA team visited the Boys' Home for the first time on 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1997. The conditions were deplorable. The 'lost' boys were housed with criminal cases. The children were emaciated, undernourished and extremely miserable.
- ICWA team started visiting the Boys' Home every week to work towards improving conditions at the Home.

Here the **Objectives** were same as those in the Women's Home:-

- health
- sanitation
- rehabilitation
- release
- vocational training and
- literacy and ongoing studies.

**Activities**

- ICWA has appointed three personnel who work 4 hours a day to supervise the daily routine of the inmates and provide vocational training.
- The ICWA Staff oversee cleanliness and hygiene
- A new floor at the Boys' Home was constructed by ICWA with funds from UNICEF to segregate the guilty from the 'lost' boys.

- Celebrations are organized on various occasions.
- ICWA has also donated Blankets, clothes, utensils T.V. and various equipment for games like carom, ludo etc.
- For Personality Development of the young boys prayer, P.T, dancing and singing , and drama. are held regularly.
- Yoga and P.T. classes are held in the morning under the guidance of ICWA staff. Games are also organized.
- Regular health check ups by Holy Family Hospital doctors are conducted.
- Stress is laid on education so that rehabilitation of the young boys is facilitated.
- The boys are guided to pursue higher education. Training is given for skill development and income generation. Vocational training is given to the residents in , candle making, bookbinding and photo framing. Certificates are given to those who successfully complete vocational training.
- Hundreds of residents, especially the lost cases have been released. due to continuous efforts of our lawyer.
- A novel practice started by ICWA in December 1999 was to hold sensitization programmes for Special Home personnel, since it was felt that the living conditions at the Homes would definitely improve if the officers and staff became more sensitive to the conditions and needs of the residents.

**Objectives achieved:**

1. There has been a tremendous improvement in living conditions.
2. The residents have learnt vocational skill and have set up their own business after release from Home
3. Hundreds of residents have been released.
4. The staff and personnel of the Homes appear more motivated.
5. The residents show signs of better integrated personalities

**III THE LITERACY PROJECT**

(started in1990)

The Literacy Project evolved through various stages. They are:

1. Literacy Centere
2. Admissions in Schools

### 3. Alumni

1. **Establishing a Literacy Centre:** Slums are visited to identify slum children and motivate parents to send them to the literacy centres. Persons ready to give their premises for literacy centres are identified. Literacy instructors are usually college students who are willing to teach for one hour in the literacy centre of their locality. Currently many of the instructors are those who studied at these centers earlier and are now doing plus two or studying in colleges.

#### At these literacy centers ICWA

- *provides books*
- *designs course contents and syllabus*
- *conducts regular examinations*
- *holds prize distribution ceremonies*
- *celebrates literacy days, Teachers' day, children's' day etc.*
- *organizes outings, games, parents day, Parent – Teacher Meet, Christmas get together etc.*

#### Other Activities of Literacy Teaching are:-

- Prize Distribution Ceremony
- World Literacy Day Celebrations
- Outings, games Christmas parties organized for literacy children.
- Annual Parent -teacher Meets of Literacy Centres.

Instructors of Literacy Centres meet the parents of the children they teach

#### 2. Stage 2 of the Literacy Project: Admissions in Schools

- **Objective:** to get meritorious children of literacy centres admitted into good schools of Patna.
- This was started in 1994. when the first batch of 4 children were admitted into St. Xavier's School Patna.
- Meritorious children from literacy centres are prepared for admission tests of schools by ICWA
- ICWA pays the fees and provides books.
- Daily tuitions for these children are mandatory at literacy centres.
- Parents and instructors are required to attend Parent -Teacher Meets .

- ICWA monitors progress of children in schools.

At present under the ICWA Literacy project there are about 130 children studying in schools and more than 350 students in Literacy Centres of ICWA, and by now more than 500 children have passed out from schools .

After the children pass out from schools ICWA guides them in getting admitted into good institutions of higher studies. Some of these institutions are:

- ✘ *Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*
- ✘ *Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai*
- ✘ *Patna Women's College, Patna*
- ✘ *Vanijya Mahavidyalaya, Patna University*
- ✘ *St.Xavier's College, Ranchi*
- ✘ *Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, Kolkata*

### **3 The Alumni Wing is stage 3 of the Literacy project.**

- The members of this groups are young college students and employed men and women who studied in literacy centres and were sent to schools under the ICWA Literacy Project.
- The Alumni are guided by the ideals of prayer, service, honesty, humility, politeness, punctuality and justice. Their slogan is : We have received, we must share.
- The Alumni work on other projects of ICWA such as working at the Boys Special Home, teaching the children of the literacy centres and giving tuitions to ICWA schoolchildren, helping in organizing functions and training the children for cultural items.
- They attend career counseling and marriage life classes held specially for them by the core group of teachers.

The literacy Project of ICWA has become mature and is now bearing fruit. A visible and dynamic social transformation can be traced in the manner the children from slums get transformed into talented and value oriented men and women ready to contribute to society as good citizens.

#### **IV Low income Group (slum) women Project was started in 2003.**

The objectives of this project are

- To identify the low income group women and train them in income generating skills to make them economically self- sufficient
- To help such women establish viable small scale business.
- To promote marketing skills among them and to provide marketing windows to showcase the products manufactured by them.
- To provide them with legal counsel and basic literacy
- To promote basic healthcare and hygiene among them
- To make available to them free of low cost medicines for common ailments.

The women have received training in candle making, decorative diyas, tailoring and embroidery. Exhibitions are held for sale of their products. Medical examination has been conducted and eye camps have been organized for them. Several batches of women, have received vocational training till now under this project.

#### **V Social Support Group was started in 2003**

The Objective is to help women belonging to middle and upper classes of society who are either separated divorced, locked in unhappy and violent relationships or have experienced bereavement and are unable to cope. The strategy used includes - sharing, counseling group sessions and yoga and meditation.

#### **Activities conducted during Covid 19 pandemic lockdown:**

1. As regular off line classes could not be conducted Literacy Centres were closed
2. Students were provided with books

3. Needy Children and their families were provided with dry ration
4. Instructors (ICWA Alumni) were also give dry ration.

At present we have 6 Literacy Centres where more than 350 children are studying. Nearly 30 ICWA Alumni are involved in teaching in the Literacy Centres.

A new project has been initiated in 2018 to cater the children studying in Government school, private school and those who need special coaching. This programme is known as ***Each one Teach One*** where students of Patna Women's College teach one child at a time. It helps to give special attention to individual students. Nearly 60 students attend these classes daily.

Thanks.