Al-Ameen College, Edathala

Best Practices-I

Pink Entrepreneurs - Transgender Empowerment

Best Practice 1

Title of the Practice: Pink Entrepreneurs - Transgender Empowerment

Objectives of the Practice:

Al-Ameen College looks forward for a democratic society in all its diversities and distinctions. We believe that all differences must be looked up to with respect and dignity, irrespective of their ideology, politics and gender. Our commitment towards the cause of transgender empowerment stems from the solid belief that sexual orientation of a person should not hinder her/his opportunities in life. Making our staff and students aware of the realities of a transgender identity, creating a gender sensitive campus and providing Orientation to the transgender people for a better life on their own are the main objectives of our engagement with this community.

The Context

We always look forward and respond to the discussions and debates going on in our society.
The Transgender community faces social discrimination and taunts every day, and are being increasingly marginalised by our society. The transgender were pushed into begging, sex work and other kinds of abominable acts due to the prevailing social conditions and were unable to generate an alternative source of Livelihood. In this context the college decided to shoulder the social responsibility of helping and rehabilitating this community through the students and staff.

The Practice

The issue of transgender mobilisation is a widely discussed and seriously pursued topic these days, we decided to respond to it by organising an interactive session in our college titled "**Beyond the Boundaries**". The Counselling Cell of the College took the initiative to convene this gathering on 26 September, 2017 and invited Sulfi and Biju, members from the transgender Community, to participate in the programme. Their life experience was truly an eye-opener for the entire college. Throughout the interaction, the two resource persons focused on the lack of decent job opportunities in our society for them. The College decided to think about it seriously and provide proper assistance and support to these people. After some ardent and serious discussions we realised that developing entrepreneurial skills will help them earn on their own.

As a follow-up to this interactive session, the Post Graduate Department of Commerce with the professional support of Centre for Excellence in Entrepreneurship Development and DHWAYAH organised a two day training programme in the campus on 17th and 18th of February, 2018. Many members of the transgender community across the state participated in the programme. Eminent personalities from various fields of entrepreneurial expertise interacted with the participants. Special attention was given towards motivating the participants to initiate a venture on their own and handle the risks involved in it without losing the morale, proved to be successful.

The students and teachers raised a decent amount of money to buy a television and a mixer-grinder for the transgender people staying at Jyothis Bhavan, shelter for transgender run by Sneha Jyothy Charitable Trust,

Evidence of Success

The Success of this project Pink Entrepreneurs could be achieved solely because of the support of the Staff and students of this College. The first story of success was the launching of an online Commerce website on 15March, 2018 for one of the participants of the training programme, Ms.Tripti Shetty. She is one of the first transgender entrepreneurs from Kerala to begin a handicraft business on her own. The College alumni took the entire expense for creating this website and offered her a laptop as an aid to manage the website and the online business. This is a remarkable instance of strong social orientation imparted to students by the institution.

The frequent interactions of students with these people brought a tectonic shift in the way students look at the transgender. The College in cooperation with Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) provided a fully furnished permanent outlet to Ms. Tripti Shetty, for starting the sale of Tripti Handicrafts. The college has paid the total amount of rent to GCDA to provide the handicraft emporium in the centre of the City. These unique and distinctive activities helped to inculcate the culture of social responsibility and gender transcendence among the students.

Understanding the need of a platform to promote the sale of these handicrafts, the college along with other Non-Governmental Organizations coordinated exhibitions of handicrafts. This was a well ordered gimmick that brought buyers, sellers and the competitors into a commercial spot.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The major issue faced in the implementation of the Project Pink Entrepreneurs was to overcome the social reluctance and the financial hiccups. Structural, interpersonal, and individual forms of stigma was pervasive among the transgender community which limited opportunities and access to resources in a number of critical domains like employment, entrepreneurship etc. Though there are many Non-Government Organisations that offer financial support to the underprivileged sections of the society, social reluctance to include this section of the people was a major hurdle in associating with these organisations.