

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL ACTION [CSA]

A CHRIST COLLEGE MODEL OF INITIATIVE FOR PROMOTING VOLUNTEERISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

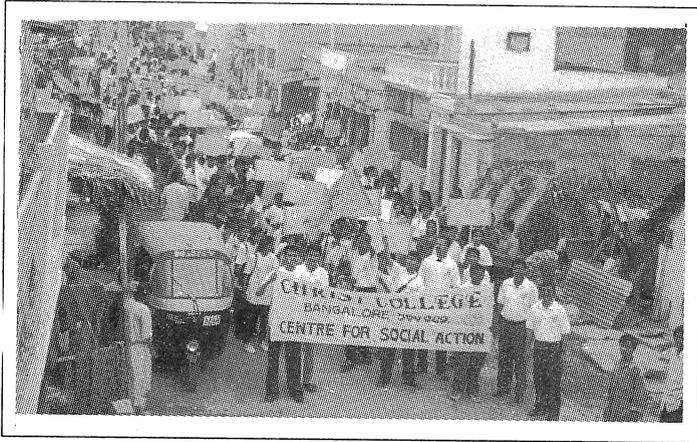
The Centre for Social Action [CSA] was established in 1999. The CSA is "a movement for 1) involvement of the students in Child Development and Sustainable Social, Economic, Cultural and Political Development of the Communities surrounding the college; 2) child protection, freedom from exploitation and underdevelopment, through child, student and community participation for the child's well being."

It is Initiated and implemented by the Management, Faculty and Students of Christ College.

Context and the Rationale

Education is a multi-polar process, which involves teachers, learners, parents, society, technology, etc. Education is an instrument for social change. This it achieves through knowledge dissemination, vocational training, and through its social and economic concerns. Hence in the context of social change, there is a greater responsibility on the part of the educational institutions towards the society. The Kothari Commission had rightly stated that, "India's destiny is designed in our class rooms." So if we are looking towards the uplift of the society, values instilled in the students will go a long way in the socio-economic reconstruction of India. No call to implement these is sufficient

unless institutional means are evolved in which students can take part, their creativity can be tapped and they are sensitised to feel empathetic to the oppressed and the poor.



Christ College has been reflecting on such concepts since six years and has been strategically planning to make the concepts explicit in action, because Christ College strongly believes that concepts will remain concepts unless it is converted into tangibles. It felt the need for a professional body consisting of socially sensitive faculty, students and development professionals to enable this. The Centre for Social Action was the result of such reflections and resolutions.

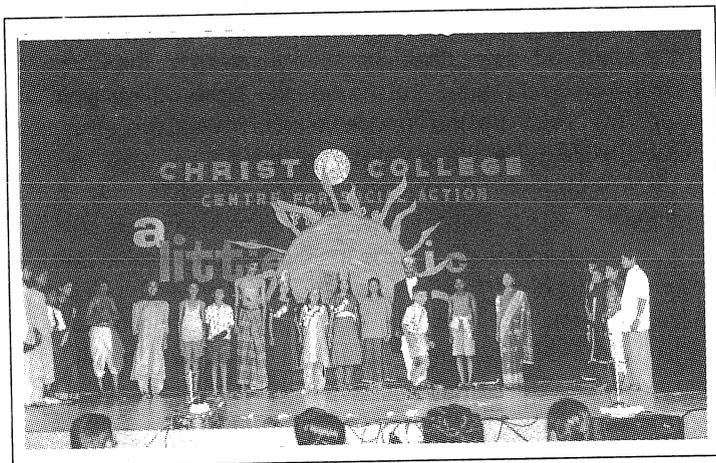
Objectives and Thrust Areas of the CSA

The Objectives of the CSA are the following:

- (1) To develop and promote voluntary action by students of Christ college and other colleges in social development.
- (2) To develop the college as a civil society organisation that can make significant interventions in social development.
- (3) To contribute to innovative practices in strengthening college - community relationships.
- (4) To implement community-based social development programmes, involving the students, to bring tangible results in the lives of the poorer and underprivileged sections of the society.

The Thrust areas of Social Action are identified as the following:

1. Promoting voluntary action by students in Social Development Projects.
2. Providing support to underprivileged children for education and capacity building.
3. Promoting compulsory elementary education for all children, especially girl children.
4. Rehabilitation of Street children, school dropouts and child labourers.
5. Sensitisation and promotion of community leadership.
6. Conducting advocacy programmes on child rights and other social issues to our students and other college students.
7. Promoting rights of women, disabled and mentally ill persons.
8. Housing and Senior Citizens' Programme.
9. Economic Development through Skill Training Centres, Income Generation programmes and Self Help Groups, especially of women.
10. Networking with government, support agencies and other NGOs for Socio-Economic development work.



Current Projects

The following are the projects that are being implemented by the CSA:

1. National Service Scheme [NSS]: It is a programme affiliated to Bangalore University, with the motto 'Not Me But You.'

2 Project Vikas: The CSA has collaboration with a professional NGO called APSA implementing a project called "Vikas". Through this programme, the

Christites [Christ College students] are sensitised on various social issues like Child Labour, Street Children, School Dropouts, Urban poverty, Rural poverty, etc. The students are taken to exposure programmes on every Saturday.

3. Child Development Programme: This programme is an initiative by the students themselves. Through this, 350 children from Rajendranagar slum are sponsored for Education and overall development. Among them, 50 are school dropouts/working children. The students are operating Quality Learning Centres, Learning Resource Centre, exclusive Children's Library, and Non Formal Education Centres in the slums where they are involved everyday in the evenings.

4. Advocacy Programmes at inter class, collegiate and inter collegiate levels is another crucial component of the CSA. Under this, student volunteers organise workshops, seminars and street plays for other students on various social issues, especially child rights. Students of different classes are taken for Rural Exposure Camps to expose them to the adverse social realities of rural India. The student volunteers disseminate information of the CSA activities through Exhibitions and Events, and through the News Bulletins called 'Not Me But You', 'My Child' and the Newsletter called 'We Care'. The work has been entirely carried out by the students themselves.

5. Marketable Vocational Skill Training: Marketable Vocational Skill Training for poor youth and women of slums and villages is another project. In the slums, the members of the family of the sponsored children are supported. The aim is to economically strengthen the families so that they are empowered to look after their children by themselves. The CSA has also established training centres in villages for two wheeler mechanics and carpentry.

6. Income Generation Programme: Income generation programmes for poor families, especially families of the sponsored children are also aimed at sustainable economic development of the families in the slums and villages.

7. Self-help Groups for savings and credit activities and income generation programmes: They are for the mothers of the sponsored children. They are encouraged towards saving and credit activities. The groups are given small loans and technical support to start income generation activities.

8. Housing for the Urban Poor: In this programme, houses are built for the slum dwellers, involving the students and the community.

9. Blood Bank: Every year the Christites donate 400 units of blood to poor patients in hospitals surrounding the college.

Broad Results

Christ College Mission statement reads as: *'Christ College is a nurturing ground for the holistic development of the individual to make effective contribution to society in a dynamic environment.'* The CSA projects have succeeded in the formation of the Christites as envisaged in the Mission. Development of personality of the students leading to expansion of the student's thinking so that student make an effective contribution to the society is being realised.

However, the primary beneficiary of the program, as it should be, are the children, the slum dwellers and the poor and the underprivileged. Sustainable community development with child as the focus involving the student community is being progressively realised. Students and the world outside are led to the realisation that we are all interdependent realities and that one person can make a difference to the world, if only one wills to.

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