

Organization Profile

The background:

The Loreto Congregation has been developing educational institutions in India for more than 150 years for the upliftment of girls, irrespective of their economic, social background and religious beliefs.

Two decades back, the Loreto Day School, Sealdah setup a resource centre for the welfare of the underprivileged, marginalized, deprived and migrant sections of the society. With the passage of time, several outreach programmes evolved from this resource centre catering to the needs, not only the people of West Bengal but also to the needy communities of other parts of India. Gradually, an increase in project activities initiated the need to have a separate social development centre to streamline the projects in different thematic areas for its organizational development and growth.

The transition:

Meanwhile, changes in the administrative structure of Loreto Congregation gave birth to Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre (KMWSC) which took over the administration of all the projects of Loreto Sealdah. In June 2014, KMWSC was registered in Kolkata under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act 1961 as a non-governmental/non-profit organization.

The expansion modality (the branching out):

Formation of KMWSC as a separate social entity facilitated undertaking many projects, thus increasing staff strength and footfall of beneficiaries, making the space insufficient at the resource centre in Sealdah. Overnight training programmes for the utilization of human resources also made residential facilities essential. Thus, KMWSC moved to the new premises at Loreto Convent, Entally, 1 Convent Lane, Tangra from where it intervenes in different districts of West Bengal and Nawada district in Bihar through multiple projects.

Present activities:

Present activities of KMWSC encompass three major thematic areas aligned with SDGs, SDG-1: No Poverty, SDG-3: Good Health & Well Being, SDG-4: Quality Education, SDG-5: Gender Equality, SDG-8: Decent Work & Economic Growth, SDG-10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG-16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions. Each thematic area includes multiple projects under it.

Thematic Area I – Women & Child Development:

Anti-Human Trafficking Project at Canning-I, Canning-II and Diamond Harbour Blocks of the District South 24 Parganas aims at creating awareness on issues of human trafficking, child marriage etc. A tracking system identifies & monitors vulnerable girls and children while Adolescent Girls Groups (AGG) maintain close liaison with vulnerable individuals. The AGG successfully prevented a number of child marriages and stopped human trafficking in the three blocks.

Providing Education and Protection to children of Commercial Sex Workers in Sonagachi aims at empowering children of sex workers with education, social stigma and vocational skills; thus preparing them to take up a respectable profession as young adults. KMWSC also provides beautician training to sex workers for creating an alternative income opportunity so that they are able to come out of the flesh trade and live a dignified life.

Hidden Domestic Child Labour Project aims to eradicate child labour, through establishment of Multi- Purpose Activity Centers for education and vocational training at Chingrighata, Muraripukur, Matijhil, Park Circus, KuliyaTangra, Rajabazar and Kolkata Station, in the slums of Kolkata.

Surokshit Saishav – Promoting Safe Child Hood in 20 villages situated under 3 Gram Panchayats of Basirhat-I Block in the District of North 24 Parganas, functions on a Rural Participatory Approach for social, resource and seasonal mapping. The project aims towards generation of awareness on basic child rights, advocacy & networking on child rights- child protection issues. Mainstreaming the dropouts & child labour into Government Schools and installation of Child Rights Protection Desk (CRPD) are some of the key activities of the project.

Thematic Area II – Education & Health Care

Brick Field Schools in Nadia, Hooghly and in the Districts of North & South 24 Parganas aims to provide education & nutritious snacks to the children of seasonal migrant laborers engaged in brick fields, through Open Air Trunk School (OATS) concept and also to provide medical assistance through health camps to migrant workers & their children. To initiate health awareness, especially about menstrual health of women and adolescent girls is another focus area of this project.

Nawada Intervention Initiatives are to mainstream children of the brickfield schools into government educational system once they return to their native villages. Most of the migrant workers in brickfields of Bengal are from Nawada district in Bihar. Intense advocacy and networking is undertaken by the project team with government departments & Kasturba Gandhi Residential Homes for girls & local schools. Till date, more than 750 children have been mainstreamed.

Lotus Child in Chaulgola and Sonapota villages of South 24 Parganas district is a Community & Adult Education programme to bridge the gap between poverty and education.

Barefoot Teachers' Training Programme is a compact & intensive training pioneered by Loreto schools with the purpose to create a window of opportunity for the grass-root level teachers to enhance their teaching skills. The programme caters to formal school teachers as well as NGO teachers from the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Manipur, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, UP as well as from Nepal.

Thematic Area III – Community Development, Livelihood & Skill Development

Skill Development Programmes in Entally, Sonagachhi in Kolkata and Canning in South 24 Parganas aims to provide training in various sectors skills and livelihood options to marginalized women and adolescent girls and establish them as self-reliant individuals. With a duration of 3 months courses in Beautician, Computer Fundamentals& Spoken English are in operation. The 6 months Tailoring and Bakery courses are also catered to.

Bakery Unit at Entally focuses to create employment opportunity for the students of the Bakery course. The unit is well equipped with state of the art plant & machinery and is run by interns of the Bakery Course under the supervision of experts. It also provides food for the Food ATM.

Cafeteria at Entally functions on the concept that the customer pays for one extra head while placing an order for themselves. This extra is utilized at the Food ATM to serve the underprivileged and the unfed. This unit provides an excellent hands-on training opportunity for students of the Skill Development course.

The Food ATM – Connecting Hearts – is an empathetic approach to feed the neediest of the society who cannot afford meals. The ATM feeds almost 150-200 hungry mouths each day. Food collected from the students and teachers of the Loreto schools on their respective designated day and the cafeteria food, is used to replenish the food ATM.

Lodha Community Project in Gangasagar helps the Lodha community – one of the most economically backward tribes in Sundarban areas of West Bengal with the procurement of identities – to achieve sustainable income generation of at least Rs. 5,000/- per month.

Solar Enlighten & Community Empowerment Programme focuses to bring illumination to the villages through solar lamps to the two inhabited island villages, Pathan Khali and Sambhupur in Gosaba, having a population of 4000 with a demographic profile of 90% Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste. A solar lamp assembling unit has been setup in the area. Besides assembling the solar lamps, the unit also provides the much needed employment to the local youths. The project also aims at harnessing alternate sources of solar energy like Bio-Gas through formation of self-help groups.

One Billion Rising – the global campaign on violence against women & their equality– is driven by our commitment to end violence against women and stand in solidarity with the global movement. For the last six years, KMWSC has been giving a voice to the voiceless and spread mass awareness on sexual slavery, human trafficking, gender equality, child marriage and sexual harassment. Performances involving schools, colleges and likeminded NGOs; sharing of survivors' testimonials, thoughts of eminent personalities are shared at the campaign. More than 10,000 people express their solidarity towards this movement through a signature campaign every year.

Rally on World Day Against Trafficking in Person – voicing our concern - This is aligned with the UN Resolution No.: A/RES/68/192, which dedicates July 30th as the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. In its efforts to create awareness against human trafficking, KMWSC organizes a Mass Rally every year at major human trafficking hubs in South Bengal. The rally is partnered by Diplomatic Missions, Government Departments and Commissions, Subdivision and Block level government officials including police administration and eminent personalities from different walks of life, contributing immensely towards raising awareness against human trafficking in the region.

With a modest beginning of serving a few beneficiaries two decades back at the resource centre at Loreto Sealdah, Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre has touched more than a million lives belonging to the most underprivileged and backward sections of the society. The vision & mission of founder Mary Ward, back in the 16th century, and initiatives of her work for Justice, Freedom, Peace, Love and Integrity is still relevant to this day. The impact of this vision inspires KMWSC to continue its journey into the 21st century, transforming more lives in the times to come and taking the organization to even greater heights.