

1. Promotion of Inclusive Education through Local Community Engagement

Title: Community-Driven Inclusivity in Education: Enhancing Access and Participation

The promotion of inclusive education through local community engagement has been a transformative best practice for this college. This initiative not only increased enrollment and retention rates but also shifted societal attitudes toward education and gender equality. Through ongoing efforts, the college aims to continue breaking down barriers to education and ensuring that students from all backgrounds can access the opportunities they need to succeed.

Objectives: • To ensure equitable access to education for all students, particularly those from marginalized rural backgrounds, including girls and economically disadvantaged groups. • To foster a sense of belonging among all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or gender. • To create a learning environment that bridges the gap between the college and the surrounding community. • To promote educational retention and success, especially for students at risk of dropping out due to financial or social challenges.

Context: S.G.H.S. College, Sri Jiwan Nagar is situated in an area where education has historically been inaccessible to marginalized groups, particularly girls and students from economically weaker sections. Traditional cultural norms in this area often prevent girls from continuing education after high school. There is a prevailing belief that girls should prioritize household work or early marriage over

education. Many students come from farming families that rely on children for labor. The college realized that simply offering education wasn't enough to address these challenges. A more inclusive, community-engaged approach was necessary to ensure that all students, especially girls, have access to and stay in higher education.

Practice: The college adopted an approach to engage the local community in promoting education. This practice was based on building trust with local leaders, families, and students, and addressing social and economic challenges faced by rural populations. The practice focused on building partnerships with local leaders, parents, and civil society organizations. Some key initiatives under this practice included:

Parent-Teacher Meetings: These meetings were held to discuss the progress of students and to encourage parents to support their children's education, especially girls.

Outreach Programs: Faculty members visited nearby villages to meet with families and Sarpanches of the villages. The aim was to raise awareness about the benefits of higher education and address any misconceptions regarding co-education. NSS volunteers organized community meetings to discuss the importance of higher education, especially for girls.

Financial Support and Scholarships: The college provides scholarships to underprivileged students, especially those belonging to SC and BC categories. Special financial aid was targeted at girls to reduce the dropout rate. **Cultural Inclusivity:** The college organizes cultural programs that celebrate local traditions and national days making the college a more welcoming place for students from rural backgrounds.

Evidence of Success: The college saw an increase in the enrollment of girls and students from marginalized communities. Female student enrollment rose and the dropout rate among girls decreased significantly. Local community members became more actively involved in the college's cultural and social activities, creating a stronger sense of shared responsibility for education. The number of students graduating from the college increased showing that efforts to retain students were paying off.

Problems Encountered: Despite outreach, some conservative families remained reluctant to send their daughters to coeducational institutions. The scholarships and financial aid programs could not cover all needy students, leading to some dropping out due to economic constraints.

Future Plans:

Expanding Vocational Training: To cater to more students, especially those unable to complete a full degree program, the college plans to introduce vocational training courses.

Infrastructure Development: The college aims to secure more funding for additional classrooms, laboratories Seminar Hall, and teaching staff to facilitate students.

Mentorship Programs: Plans are underway to introduce mentorship programs where successful alumni and community leaders can guide current students, particularly girls, to complete their education.

2. Gender Sensitization and Empowerment through Curriculum and Co-curricular Activities

Title: Empowering Rural Youth through Gender Sensitization and Leadership Development

This practice has created a significant shift in attitudes, participation, and safety for both male and female students. By integrating gender issues into the Co-curricular Activities and providing platforms for leadership and self-expression, the college has empowered young women and engaged all students in the fight for gender equality. It has enabled the institution to break down barriers to education and leadership for rural women.

Objectives: • To promote gender equality within the college and local community.

- To raise awareness about gender issues among students and faculty, including breaking down stereotypes and challenging patriarchal norms.
- To empower female students by offering leadership opportunities and platforms to amplify their voices.
- To Integrate gender sensitization into the curriculum and co-curricular activities for sustained impact.
- To create a safe and supportive environment for students to discuss gender-related issues.

Context: In rural areas, gender inequality remains a significant issue due to deeply ingrained cultural norms that limit educational and leadership opportunities for women. Many female students in rural coeducational colleges face barriers such as societal pressure to

conform to traditional gender roles, limited representation in leadership positions, and safety concerns. The college recognized that to achieve true gender equality, it needed to go beyond providing access to education and actively address gender biases within the institution. Through curriculum and co-curricular activities, the college aims to foster gender-sensitive mindsets among both male and female students, while empowering young women to advocate for their rights.

Practice: The college developed and implemented a series of initiatives to promote gender sensitization and empower female students.

Gender Sensitization Lectures: Extension lectures were organized by the Women Cell of the College for all students and faculty members to discuss topics such as gender equality, women's rights, violence against women, and the importance of breaking gender stereotypes. These sessions were led by gender experts and involved role-playing, group discussions, and interactive activities to engage participants.

Integration of Gender Studies in Curriculum: Topics related to gender studies within the general curriculum, ensured that all students were exposed to key concepts like gender roles, patriarchy, and feminism. These topics were woven into subjects such as history and literature, encouraging critical analysis of societal norms.

Leadership Development for Female Students: Female students were encouraged to take on leadership roles in student councils, clubs, and other college committees. The college created equal representation policies in extracurricular activities, providing girls with opportunities to lead and participate in these activities.

Reservation of one-third of seats in NCC: To address concerns about safety and build confidence, the college offered one-third of seats in

NCC for female students. This initiative not only improved their physical safety but also helped them feel more empowered and self-reliant.

Gender-Sensitive Grievances Redressal Cell: The college provided gender-sensitive counseling services where students could discuss personal challenges, including issues related to gender-based violence, harassment, or discrimination. The Women Cell helps girl students navigate these issues in a safe and supportive environment.

Peer Mentoring and Role Models: Female faculty members serve as mentors to female students. This peer mentorship program offers guidance, support, and role models for girls navigating higher education in a coeducational setting.

Community Campaigns on Gender Awareness: Through NCC, NSS, and Women Cell, the college extends its gender sensitization efforts to the local community through awareness campaigns and village outreach programs. These campaigns raise awareness about women's rights, the importance of girls education, and the harmful effects of gender-based violence.

Cultural Programs Focused on Gender Equality: Cultural events and competitions, such as debates, essay writing, and skits, are organized around the theme of gender equality. These events encourage students to express their views and challenge societal norms in creative ways, fostering gender equal environment.

Evidence of Success:

Increased Female Participation in Leadership: The representation of female students has demonstrated the growing confidence and active participation of female students in college affairs.

Shift in Attitudes Among Male Students: Male students became more engaged in discussions about gender equality and started to

challenge traditional gender norms. Their participation in gender sensitization workshops resulted in a more supportive environment for their female peers, reducing instances of harassment and gender-based discrimination.

Improved Safety and Confidence for Female Students: With the introduction of gender-sensitive counseling, female students reported feeling more confident and secure within the college environment, reflecting a positive shift in campus culture.

Problems Encountered: At the beginning of the initiative, there was resistance as male students viewed gender sensitization efforts as unnecessary or irrelevant. Also, organizing workshops, cultural events, and community campaigns while maintaining the academic calendar proved challenging. The college faced challenges in securing enough funds and external support to scale up these initiatives.

Future Plans: Involving more alumni: The college intends to expand its mentorship program by involving more alumni who have successfully navigated challenges related to gender discrimination. These mentors will guide current students, particularly female students, in leadership and personal development.

To collaborate more closely with NGOs: To strengthen its gender sensitization efforts, the college aims to collaborate more closely with NGOs that specialize in gender issues. These partnerships will provide additional resources and expertise.