

Reflect circles among homeless community in Chennai

2008 - 2010

Introduction:

ICWO (Indian Community Welfare Organization) works with the homeless community in Chennai supported by Action Aid India along with the **Department for International Development (DFID) funded International NGO Partnerships Programme (IPAP)**.

ICWO reaches out to the homeless community residing in 25 areas within the Chennai Corporation Area (CCA). Action Aid facilitated a national level IPAP partners consultation at Delhi before the commencement of the programme where the strategies for the intervention were discussed and planned for. The Delhi consultation meeting **motivated ICWO team to take up the reflect approach to facilitate a collectivization process of the homeless people.**

Activities so far...

In all the reflect groups one of the prime subject of discussion was on housing, the people discussed intensively on the reasons for not being allotted permanent houses for generations. They pondered on the reasons why these homeless communities were not allotted houses despite the fact that they were residing in the same place for years. The people understood that the basic documents for getting a house were ration card, voters Identity card (BPL listed) and they do not have those documents. So they have decided that they will first take initiative to get these documents before approaching the government to get a house.



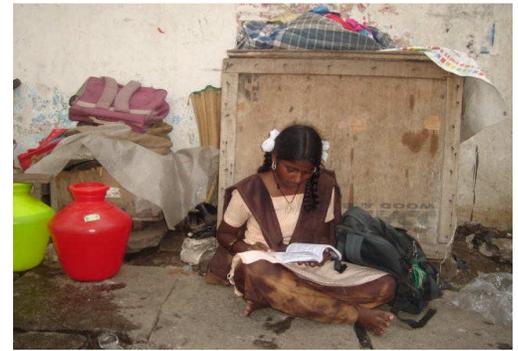
Over **5000** urban poor people from 25 locations involved in a protest rally against forced eviction

- As part of the reflect process an Exposure Visit to Relocation Sites Constructed for the Urban Poor organized for the reflect volunteers and the staff team of ICWO to Kannagi Nagar, Okkiyam Duraipakkam & Semmenjeri. The leanings of the exposure visit was that- There is no frequent supply of buses, No hospital facility, No departmental stores or even petit shops facility, No employment opportunity. No electricity facility(if need each family should pay Rs.2,500 to the government),No proper drainage facility, There is no enough palvadies and schools to educate, Due to distance many are dropped out from the school, The newly build houses are not protected safely by housing board authorities, Due to non-protection many unwanted or non-social activities are taking place, The houses are not building with enough space to live well.



- Exposure Visit to Relocation Sites provide an understanding on the plight of the relocated urban poor who were moved to resettlement sites, which is about 40 kilometers from their place of residence.
- The young adolescent girls identified in Parris were formed into a small group. A group meeting was organized for these girls on health and hygiene.

- Lives of the adolescent girls of the homeless community. A focus group discussion was organized for these girls. The main problem for these girls is that they do not have any safety place to stay and to sleep. They wait till the shops are closed and then occupy the steps of the shops, which will be around 1am. Even after that they do not have a peaceful sleep. They are often disturbed by the perpetrators like police men, lawyers and also passers by who tell them that they are higher officials. These perpetrators abuse them verbally and physically by touching and sleeping beside them.



As we found there is a need few students who are in higher secondary education felt a need for scholarship so we provided educational scholarship for homeless children.

We are in the process of forming a sangam/federation for the homeless community in Chennai.

Outcomes of the REFLECT Circles:

The learning's from one reflect group is shared among other groups and the synergy among the groups has emerged. The groups after seeing the relocation sites have decided to demand from the government to construct houses in sites nearest to their place of habitation.

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