

Role of Communication students among Slum Dwellers and Refugees

The academic year 2002-2003 was a growth-oriented year in the department of communication. With the help of World Association for Christian Communication, the Department arranged a programme on "Refugees and their Right to Communicate" for the South Asia Regional NGOs who are working among Refugees. During this year the Media Awareness Programme (MAP) was conducted for twenty schoolteachers and the classes were carried out in ten schools successfully with the help of our post graduate students. The schoolteachers and students showed a lot of interest in carrying out the MAP and requested us to do as a regular course from the next year onwards.

The department organised a meeting among the committee members of the Board of Theological Studies Senate of Serampore College to look into the M Th communication studies syllabi and revise some of them. The department has provided training to more than 200 pastors in the area of communication through Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore and also through the Department of Communication, Methodist Church of India, Hyderabad. The students started their own magazine called "Voices" to bring as an alternative means of communication. The Department also runs an interactive e-forum among the Refugee NGOs and another interfaith interactive forum among the world organisations who are interested in the interfaith discussions. These were follow up of Asia Region WACC's Seminars at UTC, Bangalore.

The ministerial students (B D students) who opted for the communication courses showed their learned skills in and through their activities of the theological community. The students on their own produced two audio cassettes in their regional languages (Malayalam and Kuki) combining their theological thinking and songs. Through media awareness training course they organised Film Festival in a successful manner. They also performed street theatre programme in more than three places this year – particularly among slum dwellers and Refugees in Hosur. The follow-up programme after street theatre programme was also carried out among the slum dwellers with the help of local NGOs.

Two of our previous post graduate students obtained first class in their overall grades and are now working in theological seminaries (one in Maharashtra C&MA Bible Seminary and New Delhi Marthoma Bible College) as lecturers. At present we have six postgraduates and another four will be joining the college soon. The department is exploring interdisciplinary courses with the department of Mission and Ecumenics. Many postgraduate students (seven from Old Testament, Counselling and ministry) from other departments opted our Media Education and Journalism courses in our department. We have two doctoral students working on their research here at UTC. The department is honoured with the post of Secretary for Asia Region WACC for its Chairperson.

Providing communication in theological education has been successful in our college. We would like to expand this to other colleges too by producing more postgraduate and doctoral students at UTC. We hope to continue high quality training to all our students and also to the wider community in communication studies. Next year activities at UTC – a major conference on Communication in Theological Education with help of WACC in August 2003 and a writer's workshop for the Refugees with the help of WACC in June 2003.

Most of our students (90%) are from Tribal or Dalit Background

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