

Managing Underprivileged People – Wings to Fly

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INTRODUCTION

The people in India who are involved in illegal activities such as bootlegging, pick pocketing and brewing illicit liquor are often stereotyped to be so. These are the people who everyday fight with the challenges like lack of opportunities, lack of educational facilities etc. Actually during the 17th century when the British passed the Criminal Tribes Act and included some of the communities into it so as to have a tab onto it, then these communities got taboo to be like that. This has forced many of them to pick up the crimes and thefts so as to sustain. There are many NGO's which work for their rehabilitation like Surgam Sanstha, Gunj, Smile foundation, etc. but there are some certain and special NGOs which are given assignments by police officials to uplift and rehabilitate these communities. One such NGO which we came across with one special motive for women empowerment lead by a strong women –WINGS TO FLY FOUNDATION.

Birth of Wings to Fly Foundation

In the year 2007, Ms. Arpita Vyas, founder and owner of Wings to fly foundation, cleared GPSC prelims but failed to clear the mains, so she worked for a year in HDFC bank, Gandhinagar. After a year she realised that her skill was not into banking, so she got herself enrolled into the rural police department of Ahmedabad contractual projects. She started working in the areas like Dholka, Viramgam and Sarkhej under the project SurakshaSetu. She did a lot of motivational work for women empowerment.

Inception and History

On 21st November 2013, she registered herself under the venture WINGS TO FLY foundation so as to work in this field whole heartedly. In those days Dr Samsher Singh IPS and other police officers were doing a lot of work to handle and neutralise the women bootleggers in Ahmedabad region. There were certain women who were bootleggers and had to face 3 months jail in case being caught, but still they were into it and not leaving this sinful job. In total 400 bootleggers were there in Ahmedabad but she was given the duty to handle 141 females out of them in the ZONE 4. She was taking care of Naroda, Kubernagar and Sardarnagar.

Slowly and gradually she observed that out of the 141 female bootleggers whom she was to motivate, the highest number was in Kubernagar and belonged to Chhara community. And



this is how Wings To Fly Foundation had become the first NGO in Gujarat to work with the Denotified tribe women of Chhara Nagar near Ahmedabad with the support of Ahmedabad City Police. Arpita was being seen by them as someone who could impart them vocational training, or some sort of skill by which they could come out of the bootlegging, pick pocketing and brewing illicit liquor.

Initial Hiccups

In the beginning, mere 6 females came for the counselling and skill learning because there were certain stereotypes attached to this segment which were- Because the British Government in India enacted the Criminal Tribes Act under which members of this community required to register with the local magistrate and report to the guardrooms several times in a day, so members of these tribes are regularly rounded up for interrogation every time there is a petty crime in the neighbourhood. Because of these the society itself is not letting the members to learn some skills and do better in life, rather they keep on doing sinful activities as a means of survival. But with the constant visits and motivation a lot more started coming to the headquarter of Wings to fly which was then in the police station itself of the Kubernagar. The skill imparted were Jewellery Making, Meenakari (temple making), Stitching, etc.

Success Story of Wings To fly

Pooja(19) is a resident of Kubernagar area of Ahmedabad and a daughter who lost her father at an early age. Like all

other Indians her father was the only bread earner of the house and after him he left a family of 5 to survive. After her father, Pooja's brother started looking after the family. He was a technician and was not able to draw enough income for their survival which lead him to join the liquor selling business in Kubernagar. But Pooja couldn't stand his brother getting into unfair income where he was continuously harassed by police. So she decided to work and it was Wings To Fly Foundation which helped her to earn her bread by training her in the Kubernagar beauty parlour which is run by Wings to Fly Foundation. Pooja is a hard working girl and so she has been moved from Kubernagar beauty Parlour to DIVA parlour. DIVA parlour is a beauty parlour run by Wings to fly foundation with the strong support of TATA trust.

Pallavi(27) who was involved in brewing illegal hootch for 7 years was continuously motivated to get out of the hell, trained under WTFF beauty and wellness program and now she feels herself not in heaven but yes she has started respecting herself and is an urban clap employee drawing a respectful income which is equivalent to an MBA graduate placement figures.

Rajshri Jadhav(33) is also a shining name in the success stories of Wings to Fly foundation. She was trained under the Godrej Beauty and Wellness training program. Rajshri was a quick learner and hence became a part of the beauty trainers in the team for 3 years. Looking after her hard work and dedication she was appointed as a lady supervisor for Wings to Fly Foundation –Kubernagar branch. She is a huge support to her family and aspires to make her little kid a responsible citizen.

WINGS TO FLY FOUNDATION OUTREACH

There are basically two types of NGOs- one is an operational and other one a campaigning NGO. The difference is on the basis of small scale change achieved and the large scale impact on the society. WTFF has achieved the outreach towards abused and economically neglected women by means of counselling and vocational training. There are different types of training which are imparted like crafting of handicrafts, jewellery, sanitary pads, minakari, handmade chocolates, manufacturing of candle and agarbatti, garment manufacture, stitching and beauty & wellness programs. The headquarter which is required for an operational NGO is being provided by Nagar police station which extends the support in terms of physical resources. The long term outreach happens when the trained women from these centres get hooked with some brands like VLCC, urban clap, etc. There are some examples of these campaigning NGO role in which the abused women have not only learnt required skills but has also become training partners in the headquarters. Currently WTFF is running its 5 centres, 2 in Kutch and 3 in Kubernagar and so far its has touched and upgraded lives of approximate 5000 women in a span of 7 years.

We MET and WE SUCCEDED

WingsToFly-The Foundation started its journey, its first project-**Sakhi Sahay Project** in collaboration with **Ahmedabad Police** in uplifting the Denotified tribe women involved in criminal activities. Ahmedabad Police supported the cause for initial years with complete funding later allocating two rooms to the foundation where the women learn jewellery making, stitching, handicrafts, beauty

treatments and other skills. They are still working hard for the upliftment of the community women. With the help of **Baroda Police**, they also helped women survivors of human trafficking in Baroda, groomed them in the marketing skills and deployed them in a self raised call centre for a Jewellery company in the town. This role of men in Khakhi forces us to understand that the Indian police is not only there to fight against crime but is also actively working in taking people out of crime and striving hard to making their lives better.

In 2016, **Godrej Saloon** and **Saath** became its kindness partner and started with a Beauty and Wellness lifeskill training program, which has so far trained more than 600 women, all of whom are either employed somewhere or are being helped to run a saloon of their own.

Tata trust has also been a big contributing partner in providing the vocational training to the women through Wings to fly foundation. It has consistently trying to enlighten them about their rights and keeps motivating them for their personal betterment.

Wings to fly foundation have also been a boon to kids. Apart from running a day school in the kubernagar property where kids are imparted primary schooling co curricular activities including Maths, Science, English; it also successfully installed RO water plants in two Corporation schools near Devnagar and Vejalpur with the help of **Mitsubishi Electric** to ensure that kids get pure water to drink.

With the help of **Rotary Metro Ahmedabad** and **Larsen & Toubro**, Wings to Fly Foundation has set up a manufacturing unit in its Kubernagar branch where 100 percent biodegradable sanitary pads are made out of banana leaves. Rotary Metro Ahmedabad also provided with sewing machines as a earning livelihood to the struggling women.

Recently Wings to Fly foundation and **Cybage khushboo** came together for the upliftment of women from Sharanya community.

Today when Social distancing is the topic of discussion, in **COVID-19**, **Wings to Fly The Foundation** emerged out to be a real HERO by everyday feeding 800 people through continuous support of **Kedarnath Padyatri trust**. It were the efforts of this socially deprived women of the foundation who worked day and night for welfare of the needful.

Many other reputed organisations, institutions and firms like **HSBC, Reliance, PDP, Civil Hospital, IIM Ahmedabad** have come together in helping the foundation to organise workshops, where they can be taught and imparted knowledge as well as have managed to arrange stalls for them where they can display and sell their handmade jewelleryes and other handicraft items.

It is very certain that in the last few years the progress made by Wings to fly foundation is huge. Through the support of their kindness partners Wings to Fly has successfully arranged the following Vocational training programs:

- Hand Made Chocolates
- Hand made Meenakari handicrafts
- Candle and Agarbatti making
- Garment manufacturing
- Sanitary pads' manufacturing

Mehndi classes
Self Defence and Martial art programs for girls
Traffic awareness campaigns for students
Career guidance seminars for under graduate and graduate students.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

There is no second thought about the innovative approaches used by WTFF for the upliftment of the society by the means of integrated projects which has been mentioned earlier, and these are the reasons why she has been recognised by reputed forums for her dedicated service and contribution. She is the winner of Digital Winner Awards 2019, recognised as an outstanding partner for the 2016-2020 in beauty and wellness sector. Her work has also been recognised All Ladies League Economic Forum and many more...

Udaan Award 2014

Best NGO, CMSB National Award, 2014

Udgam Women Achievers Award for Women Empowerment

Unsung Hero by Accor Group Hotels 2017

Rotary Club Ahmedabad Award for her efforts in

Women Empowerment-2016-17, 2018-19

Unsung Hero Award in Yugantar 2019 National Youth Conference.

Diva Dandi award by Jagrut Jan Trust, 2019.

Irony

There are some critical issues which emerged out of our studies in working of the NGO and long term effect on the society- Having defined NGO as manifestations of society in trust the relevance and importance of this NGO is still restricted towards some strata of society. Because when

socially deprived women are counselled other from the same community try to pull her back. This happens because of the mentality of the people (Hedonic effect). In spite of the dedication and hard work somewhere the message is not clearly touching the hearts of society and its residents because the fund contribution for the NGO is very less. The support towards NGOs in India suppresses enthusiasm, it means everyone talks about the necessity to control the crimes like boot lugging theft but when such efforts are being executed towards it the support from the concerned stake holders is not there. This is the reason when the founder tries to extend the hand to the needy people they sometimes take it negatively and relate it with political propaganda.

Mission & Vision

Truly penned down in their Mission Statement- "**Empowered women is powerful beyond measure and beautiful beyond description**", Ms Arpita Vyas and her team are working tremendously hard with full dedication for upliftment of women and kids coming from socially and economically deprived community. Their vision is not to leave any stone unturned to meet their objectives. It is very much clear that the foundation is striving to work for the Denotified tribes and marginalized communities, underprivileged kids, physically and socially exploited women. It wants to make these communities aware about their rights, the government schemes and wants to train them through various vocational training programs to make them self independent. To make them socially, emotionally and economically strong persons and convert them from a bud to a blooming flower.

