**AUXILIUM COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**Gandhi Nagar, Vellore – 632006, Tamil Nadu, South India**

**Questionnaire on the Cultural Dimension of Right to Education**

**Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education – United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures**

**An Overview of the Institution**

Auxilium College, established in the year 1954, is the first women’s college established in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, South India. It is located in an arid suburban region, considered as a backward area in terms of education and economic growth. The college is 66 years old now and offers Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Research Programmes in many Arts, Science, Humanities and Social Science disciplines.

**Institutional and State Government Policy (in favour of cultural diversity and rights)**

The Institutional Framework of Auxilium College as per its institutional policy and the policy of the State Government gives equal opportunity to students from various national, cultural, religious and social backgrounds. They are given a chance to enroll themselves in any programme of their choice.

The College runs Programmes with grant-in-aid from the Government as well as self-financed programmes. As per the guidelines for grant-in-aid programmes, the College should allot 50% of the sanctioned seats to the minority community, 1% should be for Scheduled Tribes, 18% should be for the Scheduled Caste and 31% for the Backward Classes and 20% for the Most Backward Classes. This being the status of the College in student admission for aided programmes, for the self-financed programmes the entire sanctioned seats could be filled with students according to the discretion of the Admission Committee of the College Management. In spite of being a minority (Catholic) institution, the College allows for cultural diversity by giving equal opportunity to students from various cultural backgrounds. We have Catholics, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, students from within the State of Tamil Nadu, students from outside the State of Tamil Nadu and also from abroad.

**Curricula (ensuring cultural diversity and rights)**

The Curricula is comprehensive enough to accommodate the faith, belief and practices of various cultures. To inculcate values among students, the College offers Christian Doctrine for Catholic students and Value Education for students of non-Catholic faith. Religious principles of the College are never thrust on students. The Programme objective of the College has the promotion of cultural diversity as an important criterion for all disciplines. The Master’s Programme in English has an Independent Elective Course in Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. All the courses offered under all programmes aim to instill critical thinking and leadership in the students and are free from any narrow divisive politics. A service group of the College called the National Service Scheme celebrates the National Integration and Communal Harmony Week to promote peace and appreciate cultural diversity. Every year, the Department of English conducts the Peace Essay Competition and the winner is honoured with Rabindro Peace Plaque. All the Postgraduate students take up a course in Human Rights, as part of their curriculum. A certificate course in Human Rights and Values in Education is offered to Undergraduate students from all disciplines, the students go on field visits to orphanages, homes for the elderly, school for blind, rehabilitation centres and aftercare homes, as part of their course study.

As part of the voluntary service by AICUF (All India Catholic Union Federation), the Sisters and students of Auxilium College take part in compassionate service to the Sri Lankan Refugees camped in 6 camps in Vellore. Refugee students are given admission in the College for higher education. The refugee service is sustained by the efforts of the Principal of Auxilium College, Dr. Sr. Regina Mary, who collaborates in the mission of the Jesuit Refugee Service. Students from the neighbouring tribal village called Jawadhi Hills are given preference in admission to the degree programmes in the College.

**Choice of Language and promotion of Art and Heritage**

As per the two-language policy of the State Government, the College prescribes two languages of which English is the second language and mandatory and the first language is left to the choice of the learner; under this scheme, the College offers Tamil, Hindi, Urdu and French as first languages. A certificate course in German is introduced for students from all the disciplines.

The College has initiated an Anti-Human-Traffic Club to sensitize students on human trafficking and the ways and means to eradicate the crime.

**Participation of Stakeholders**

The College involves the participation of all the stakeholders of higher education in planning and execution of academic, extra-curricular and extension activities of the College. Students, Parents, Sisters, Members of the Management, Past Pupils, Friends from the neighbourhood and the adopted villages of the College, Representatives from Industry, Subject Experts, Lawyers and Doctors contribute their suggestions, concerns and expertise in all the policies and logistics of the Educative Mission of the College. Parent-Teacher Meetings are held once in three months to enable effective interaction between the parents and the teachers. Parents are informed about the academic profile and personal needs and growth of their children in the meeting. The College has a Council for all the stakeholders called the Educative Community that has regular meetings on the integral growth of young students and the ways and means to ensure the same. Students Forum Meetings are held regularly to get their feedback and suggestions about everything that concerns their education.