

MOTHER TERESA WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY, KODAIKANAL

INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Championing the cause of fulfilling the Motto, 'Towards Equal Status', through 'Women of Self-Efficacy and Self-Sustenance' Measures

The Mother Teresa Women's University, established in 1984, under Tamil Nadu Special Act 15, is by itself a distinct institution named after the veteran and legendary *Saint Mother Teresa*. With the motto 'Towards Equal Status', the University currently focuses on the distinctiveness of the sexes on the assumption that the gender divide is sharper and deeper than biological essentialism. Women or the female race as the Global feminists point out, are 'different,' noted for their differential experiences, perspectives, and concerns.

The University departments have by their distinct approaches and perspectives worked in unison on a singular theme--strengthening women's capabilities and self-survival skills using the institutional repositories. Women trained in various skills by the University have found pragmatic solution to the complex state of their lives and have become equal partners in the economic growth of their family, state, and nation.

This Women's University has been an academic light house for girls from poor, improvised background, particularly rural and tribal girls, destitute, and abandoned women and by its flexibility has opened its portal for higher education to all aspiring women.

Sensitization on Women's Self-efficacy and Self-sustenance

A glut of programs has been organized to sensitize the women: Early Marriage: Issues and Concerns, Gender Equality for Adolescent Girls and Tribal women, Necessity of Higher Education for Women, Gender Parity and Women Employability in Present Scenario, Women's Health and Hygiene, Gender and Women Empowerment, Gender Equality for Adolescent Girls, Sexual Abuse and Self-Defense Techniques, Challenging Patriarchy by Promoting Gender Equality, and several other programs.

Short-term Courses on Women and Legal Rights, Constitutional Rights of Women are offered for promoting gender equality. The woman farmers of *Kodaikanal Hills* were provided with face-to-face orientation on the significance of organic farming practices to avert the harmful impact of chemical and synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

Women Entrepreneurship Training

Along with the theoretical aspects of gender sensitization, practical application was imparted by way of training programs. The University trained the woman farmers on Apiculture, Mushroom Cultivation, and Compost Making. Yoga Sessions were periodically conducted to emotionally prepare women to challenge problems like health issues, domestic violence, abuse, and harassment at public places.

[

Entrepreneurship Training programs were conducted for rural and tribal women on Fabric Painting, Door Mats Spinning, Paper Bags Making, and Millet Food Preparation. Workshops on Managerial Skills and Leadership Styles of Woman Entrepreneurs were organized with the sponsorship of NCW.

Funded Projects and other Programs

(2014-2017) “The Socio-Economic Status of Street Vendors with Special Reference to Women in Madurai City”, is yet another project with the grant **Rs. 7.5 lakhs**, analyses the hidden aspects of the difficulties faced by woman street vendors.

(2017-) A project on ‘A Study on Child Marriage in Theni District’, sanctioned by Dept of Social Defence (Govt of Tamil Nadu), State Child Protection Society, Chennai, and District Child Protection Unit, Theni, to a tune of **Rs. 7.5 lakhs** seek to explore the sensitive aspects of Child marriage, and its sever consequences.

(2019) An SIRD, Tamil Nadu Govt. funded Project (**Rs. 4.11 lakhs**) on the evaluation of Panjayat Raj Institute, Self Help Group (SHG), Network Convergence Framework in Ramnathapuram and Virudhunagar Districts was undertaken to assess the contribution of the SHG towards rural uplift.

(2017) An ICSSR sponsored National Conference on “**Women Against Violence-(WAV)**” - therapy for “**Violence Against Women- (VAW)**” with the fund of Rs. 1 lakh was conducted to find solution for violence against women, which led to the constitution of the WAV club.

(2018) An ICMR sponsored National Conference on **Innovative Smart Technologies for Public Health Care** with a grant of **Rs. 40 thousand** was conducted to sensitize the women folk on personal health.

(2018) An ICSSR sponsored national conference with the fund of **Rs. 1 lakh** was held for tribal women empowerment via emerging technologies.

(2019) A workshop on Self- Protecting Techniques for adolescent girls from sexual abuse to the tune of **Rs. 1.25 lakh** trained the young girls in defensive techniques to save themselves in endangered situations.

(2020) Workshop on, ‘Menstrual Hygiene among Tribal and Rural Women’, has received a research grant of around **Rs. 2.32 lakhs**, to explore issues that has largely been unaddressed.

(2020) National Commission for Women sponsored workshop on “Empowering Underprivileged Rural Women as Entrepreneurs Via Skill Training Program in and around Madurai District” was conducted with the grant of **1.32 lakhs**.

The DST CURIE supported **Centre for Artificial Intelligence (CAI)** with the fund of **Rs. 70 lakhs**, enrolled 1200 students from affiliated colleges as its members with the vision of “Train to Transform, Lead to Success” with the new initiative ‘**CAI**’. The CAI has conducted Internal Workshops and Seminars to train the young girls as techno-crafts to shape them into next generation AI Technologies.

Success Stories

- An innovative club has resulted after a National conference was conducted on “**Women Against Violence-(WAV)**” -therapy for “**Violence Against Women- (VAW)**”. This club has as its members-rural girls who dared to openly articulate and confessed to being sexually abused. The club has motivated them to report the crime that would aid in controlling victimization. The Club also equips young girl children with self-defense techniques. The WAV Club sensitizes the students as well as the rural folk on the necessity of physical and mental fitness. This endeavor was appreciated by the Inspector General of Southern Zone of Tamil Nadu.
- A campaign on, “**Beti-Bachao, Beti-Badho**” which won the accolades of the District Collector helped in infusing consciousness-awakening and in implementing the efficacy of this welfare service in slum areas.
- The University,with the cooperation of **Justice Shivraj PatilFoundation**, ventured into resolving the long-standing bonded woman laborers’ family issues under the ‘**Women Legal Rights**’ Program and succeeded in setting the bonded woman laborers in and around Dindigul and Madurai Districts free to pursue their goals. This unique venture

was felicitated by Justice Shivraj Patil, formerly Judge and Member, National Human Rights Commission.

- Spearheading the students to earn while they learn and to help them meet small essential expenses, MSW students were involved in purchase of products from '**Gandhigram Trust**' and selling the same to the staff and students of MTWU. This practice done five to six times in a year, has yielded good profit to the students.
- Through the University's **Entrepreneurship Development Cell** several young students, rural and tribal women, have initiated/established their start-ups as entrepreneurs in various fields like Medicinal Garden, Fertilizer Retail Outlet, Coffee & Pepper Export, Confectionaries, Online Apparel Business, Cottage Industries, Dairy Farm, Online Cosmetic Business, Kids Boutique, etc.

Mother Teresa Women's University which is unique in its Administrative Structure-'***For the women, By the Women, and Of the Women***', has opened various avenues for women to sensitize them to realize their self-efficacy and build up their self-sustaining skills.

The University has been taking efforts to train the women to be the equal partners of the economic growth and development of their family, state, and nation. With its continuous efforts, the University has certainly enabled and will continue to enable women to be equal partners, (***Towards Equal Status***) in national building in terms of Labour-Participation, Decision-Making, Innovative-Entrepreneurship, Constitution-Stakeholders, and all.