

## Model Citizen: Throwing light on mental health

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After finishing her diploma in physiotherapy from Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, Angelin Prince did not aspire for a regular 9 to 5 job.



Angelin Prince  
Chennai:

Inspired by Dr Ida Sophia Scudder, the founder of CMC, Vellore, she wanted to do something in the healthcare sector. “My husband encouraged me to specialise in a specific field. I went on to do a Masters in Social Work from Stella Maris College. I specialised in Medical Psychology,” says Angelin, who had the option of joining an NGOs or other top firms in the field. However,

she chose to start something of her own. “I was keen on making a difference in mental health. Since it was my speciality, I thought I would dedicate myself to that. I started Candles in August 2014. The idea was to spread the light.”

Once she started Candles, her first task was to conduct mental health camps for the underprivileged. “After working with the financially weaker sections of society, I realised that the problems they face are deep-rooted. They don’t understand the basic concept of mental health and find it easier to sweep it under the carpet. Lack of proper education is the single most important reason for this. So we decided to make awareness on mental health as our starting point,” she says.

Apart from the mental health programmes, they started conducting classes for underprivileged kids. “We currently provide pre and postnatal counselling at Kilpauk Medical College (KMC). We also have a programme for kids in government schools, where we teach them basic English. We have also adopted a village in Sriperumbudur, where we take care of the education of the children. We have also helped in the cleaning of a lake there. This is part of our project called Jananam. Our plan was to restore ponds and other waterbodies at Krishukandigai village, near Kancheepuram, that comes under Mevalurkuppam Panachayat. Our volunteers cleaned the pond filled with dead plants and debris. People used the lake to clean clothes. Over the years, the water became totally unfit for household use. After talking to the local authorities and seeking their permission, we started the work and it’s still going on,” says Angelin.

According to her, the journey has been challenging but also gratifying. “We started with no money. I used my own funds and with the additional support from my family, we managed things. Funds are still a challenge, but when we see the hard work getting paid off in the form of smiles, it’s all worth it.”

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