



Bulletin -24

From **DURBAR**

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Sex- workers moving to the centre stage of women labour movement

Even a few years back Sex workers were outcaste from the worker's movement as the political party affiliated trade unions were either reluctant or refused to recognize sex-work and sex workers as workers. But in the recent past their attitude towards sex workers and issue s pertaining to sex work is being recognized. Many trade unionist slowly but steadily changing their viewpoint and started embracing the cause and rationale of the sex workers rights movement.



This year Binodini Sramik Union-

an ally of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee participated in a rally which was organized by the New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI). New Trade Union Initiative is the first trade union in the country to recognize sex workers as workers.

On 8th March working women of West Bengal, representing 11 different occupations which includes daily wage laborers, mid day meal workers, Asha Workers, Sex workers, domestic

workers, construction workers , Beedi workers, quarry workers, hawkers and many others who participated in the rally which was started from Sealdah Railway Station.

Binodini Sramik Union and Durbar Disha Mahila Griha Sramik Samanwaya Committee[A trade union of domestic workers] who are members of the core team [working women council]of

NTUI, West Bengal crystallized

their core issues and demands

and took the opportunity of the

International women's day to

champion their charter of

demands. Their charter of

demands includes rights to

unionize, provision of social

security meant for organized

working class eg maternity

benefit, detection treatment and

compensation for occupational diseases, adequate protection against sexual violence etc. The

women started their walk paying homage to the victims who protested against sexual

exploitation of women. The rally marched from Sealdah station to Moulali with the beats of

drums brought by the quarry workers from Birbhum district. The women raised slogans for

recognition of their respective trade unions and other demands. They carry along with colorful

placards and posters. The rally ended at Y channel, Dharmatala where there was a conjugated

assemblage along with other women activist groups called Maitryi who are also fighting for the

women's rights issue. Altogether 5000 women workers participated in the rally spontaneously

what appears to be a great success of the NTUI working women council organizing committee.

The women workers met with the Minister in Charge of Labour, West Bengal and submitted

their Charter of Demands. The representatives of the working women council of NTUI also held

a deputation to the Governor of West Bengal on the very next day demanding their due

recognition of their trade union rights and introduction of social security measures.



DMSC participated in the Assemblage on Soni Sori on the International Women's Day in kolkata

The heinous crime committed by the police officers of MP against Soni Sori is a national shame. DMSC along with other organization since last one year is demanding unconditional release of Soni Sori and to provide proper medical treatment to her. On 8th March Soni Sori Mukti Morcha organized an assemblage in front of Academy of Fine Arts on occasion of International Women's Day to strengthen this call.

Soni Sori Mukti Morcha make an effort to portray the plight of an Adivashi women, who is still under the bar without any crime committed by her .It is an irony when the entire



nation is celebrating International Women's Day, in the same land an Adivasi women and school teacher is being exploited, harassed and denied her basic rights as women and citizen of the country.

Around 70 representatives from DMSC participated in this open gathering seeking justice of Soni Sori! The meeting was attended by over 200 Morcha members who interacted with people from different walks of life who also put their signature in the letter demanding her release and example nary punishment to the erred police official.

DMSC Celebrated International sex workers day!

The 3rd of March is now recognized as the International Sex Workers Day all across the Globe The story begins at Kolkata day when Durbar decided to hold a festival called Milan Mela,with an objective to spread a sense of togetherness and friendship between sex workers and other members of the society during 2001 .A bunch of self righteous women's group and moral band wagon wanted to close down this conference on the ground that sex-workers being an ' of the

society should be shunned from organizing any program of their own. They moved a petition to the vice president of India in addition to .Police and administration to begin with took a negative stand not providing permission to hold sex-workers festival. However a strong gathering of 10000 sex workers was unmoved to this decision. They along with their supporters left no stone unturned to hold the conference in Kolkata. At that time it was quite unthinkable for the commoners to watch a conference of sex workers but the combined effort of DMSC and their friends made it possible and the festival was finally inaugurated by the sheriff of Kolkata on 3rd March, The minister in charge of Sports and youth affairs throw dinner to all the participants attending the festival the very next day thereby making the sex workers festival an acceptable activity by the sex workers, It became a grand success where more than 35 thousand people representing different walks of life attended this four days festival and interacted with the sex workers representatives. Since 3rd March is designated and celebrated as International Sex Workers Day by the sex worker organizations and others across the world.

This year Durbar and its allied organization celebrated International Sex workers day in different sex work sites including Sonagachi, the largest red-light district in Kolkata, West Bengal. On that day DMSC organized “oath taking ceremony “by the elected representatives of DMSC representing 59 branch committees of DMSC from the state of West Bengal. DMSC also organized several other programs including health camp and community events in numbers of red light districts. The newly elected central committee of DMSC took oaths that they would protect and secure the rights of each and every sex workers who are in sex profession anywhere in the country.

Health Camp in Dumdum

On the eve of International Sex Worker’s Day, the domestic workers in Dumdum with the support of the DMSC also celebrated this day demanding the rights of the women domestic workers in the country. The domestic worker’s organization Durbar Disha Mahila Griha Sramik Committee organized a health camp and community event in Dumdum area on this occasion.

Through this health camp medical treatment and diagnostic services which includes blood sugar and blood group test provided to poor slum dwellers free of costs. The camp was attended by a general physician who examined patients attending make shift clinics with free distribution of medicines. Slum dwellers including domestic workers, their children and family members availed those services. More than 100patients attended the camp.

The camp was followed by a community event and sports for the domestic workers and their family members. Nearly 52 children participated in those sports organized jointly by the DMSC and the trade union of Domestic workers.125 children participated in the day long sport activities.

DMSC attended Pension Parishad dharna in Delhi

DMSC participated in Pension Parishad dharna (Assemblage) during the budget session of Parliament in Delhi. The dharna was staged at Jantor Mantar,Delhi stretching from 4 to 8th March 2013.A huge centralized protest was organized on 6th March through mobilization of unorganized workers from all across the country. Unorganized workers access to MNREGA and Universal pensions for all categories of workers were the major demand of this demonstration program. The National Federation of Indian Women, All-India network of sex workers(AINSW), Anganwadi workers association, Agricultural and others unorganized workers jointly put their common charter of demand which includes old age pension, and assurance of food security through establishing of an universal rationing system in the country .

The key demands of Pension Parisad was

- Abolish APL/BPL system for pension and ration, it must be universal
- Pension must be half the wage of a worker
- There should be no discrimination in Pension scheme
- It should be started immediately

The members of AINSW from different states including DMSC, was present in this dharna. On behalf of AINSW, Bharati Dey raised the demand of the sex workers and urged for the pension of all aged sex workers which was handed over to all MPs and ministers those who attended

and addressed the assemblage. Mr Jayram Ramesh from the ruling party in addition to couple of political leaders and MPS of the opposition party who attended the dharna acknowledged the demands and promise to lend their support in favor of their demands. She requested PMs to settle the demands of all the working men and women of the country through proper and effective consultation with the representatives of the Pension Parisad within next 5 to 7 weeks of time.

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