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Durbar Bulletin -39

Amra Padatik & Durbar Celebrate International Menstrual Hygiene Day

This year, for the first time Amra Padatik (An organization of and for Sex-workers' children) celebrated **International Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day)**, supported By **WHO and Durbar Mahila Samanwaya committee**. The purpose of this day is to create a united voice for women and girls around the world, helping them to break the silence and confront the taboos surrounding menstruation.

On this occasion, DMSC organized awareness and advocacy program in red-light area of Sonagachi, Kolkata. Eminent Gynecologist Dr Dipanwita Hazarika and Chief Advisor to DMSC Dr Smarajit Jana, DMSC Secretary Ms Bharati Dey, gave an insight on the importance of maintaining proper hygiene during menstruation. The event was also attended by Moumita Das of Lutheran World Service and Swati Chatterjee of South Calcutta Sannidhya. The event ended with a 'Baul Gaan' by Akhshay Mukherjee and 'Damini' – a dance drama by Komol Gandhar on the rights of women.

“Usually we use untidy and torn leftover clothes during periods which can lead to serious health hazards. It's a very natural phenomenon among women, without which they cannot give birth to child. The society should understand that there is nothing wrong or unnatural about it. It's high time we should come forward and raise our voice against the taboos surrounding menstruation.” Ms Dey mentioned in her speech.

Dr Jana commented on age old misconception about menstruation and its adverse affect on health and social status of women. He said that though our ancestors invent the physiological cause and science behind menstruation, more than 150 years but we failed to accept it as a natural and usual phenomena and it took so long to get recognized by the global community. It is a shame that women in 21st century are still access their basic health needs. He urged that “On this day, we are trying to bring forward men and women together to break the silence and to celebrate their womanhood”

Dr Hazari said that, “With changing lifestyle, the age for Menarche has gone considerably down from 13-14 years to 9-12 years. So it is important for the parents to share basic

information about menstruation with their daughters at an early age. Just like any other days, we should take proper bath during these days and eat healthy food, rich in protein.”

It was then followed by a street play focusing importance of sanitary napkin usage and societal taboos linked to menstruation by Komol Gandhar, the cultural wing of Amra Padatik. Durbar also distributed free sanitary napkins to adolescent girls to bring about a change in their attitude and make them use napkins instead of cloth.

Durbar participated in National Conference on Social Security of unorganised Labour of India

Durbar as representative organisation of Sex Workers, participated in the National Conference on Social Security of Unorganised Labour Sector of India, held in Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi on June 5-6, 2014.

In order to establish the basic rights of sex workers, Durbar feels that sex workers should be given workers rights. In this conference Durbar shared strategies to strengthen the movement of securing rights and other social entitlements, which are as follows:

- Sex work is work and those who have accepted this profession as a livelihood option must be respected like any other worker in the country.
- All disenfranchised community must access Health related social security scheme and discrimination free Health Services.
- Pension is the right of all Old age women including sex workers and state authorities should fulfil this demand.
- Civil society organisations must include Sex workers demands in their Agenda and highlight it at every social platform.

Amra Padatik & Durbar participate in NACG formation Meeting in Delhi

Amra Padatik and Durbar have recently become members of National Action and Coordination Group (NACG) India: ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN. On June 6, the formation meeting of this group was held in New Delhi wherein Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee represented on behalf of sex workers of West Bengal.

The governments of 8 SAARC countries of our region have united in the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC). India's Government is already a part of this regional pledge. Now the NGOs of our country -- organisations and networks, forums, campaigns, alliances, and institutions are coming together to constitute a all-India forum to consolidate voices of children. During this meeting a long plan of action was formulated followed by the National Board was constituted.

DURBAR-YMSA's Joint Venture in arena of Sports

On 6th June 2014 DURBAR-YMSA team, which is taking part in 3rd Division Kolkata IFA League, started its campaign by defeating Belegkata BB by 3-1 goal. This has opened up opportunities for children of sex workers and other marginalized communities to play football and to build career in the said sport. Durbar always supports the talent of the children of sex workers and believes that besides education they can also shine in the arena of sports with their skills. Surojit Bhattacharya and Biswajit Nandi, who have taken part in Homeless Soccer World Cup 2013, are member of this 3rd Division team Kolkata for the football League.

Kudos for DURBAR & its Associates

- I. With support and guidance of All India Network of Sex Workers, the female sex workers residing in Agra has formed a new CBO (Community based organization) with support of All India Network of Sex Workers. The CBO has a 7 members' executive board which consisting of female sex workers of Sikandara, Basaitajunge and Fatehabad in Agra.
- II. Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee has been awarded to carry out Targeted Intervention project in Digha-Shankarpur. On the other hand Amra Padatik has awarded the same in Jalpaiuguri-Malbazar, Koochbehar-Dinahata, Naihati-Vatpara-Shyamnagar.
- III. The USHA Cooperative Society has been recognized as sub-member of The Reserve Bank of India and co-partner of ING Vyasya. This collaboration of USHA and the ING Vyasya is going to provide various services and benefits to the sex workers like any other banks in the country.

The Drop In centre in Khidderpore under the Integrated Program for Sex workers and their children in Khidderpore and Sonagachi has been recognized by the Sarba Shiksha Aviyon of West Bengal (SSM, WB). The SSM has donated Rupees 1 lakh for the children of sex workers which could help Durbar to ensure reading and other supportive materials to the children of female sex workers residing in Khidderpore area.

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