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Amra Padatik organised a rally on the Eve of Independence Day

Amra padatik, an organization of sex-worker's children established in 2006 organized a rally on the eve of Independence Day to raise their voices against the societal discrimination meted out to children of sex-workers of our country. The rally was attended by more than 1500 workers children across the state. It started from Sonagachi and



to the sex-our. The rally attended than 1500 workers children across the started Sonagachi walked

through Central Avenue and finally ended at College Square. Participants raised slogans to decriminalize sex-work and sex-workers.

Amra Padatik stands for the rights of sex-worker's children and aims to bring about a change in the outlook of the society about sex workers and their children. Unlike other marginalized children, the major issue with the sex-workers' children is identity crisis. Amra Padatik has been working since last eight years in promoting education and other career building opportunities for their peers and colleagues.

Ratan Dolui, secretary of the organization said that, "Our country has been independent for 67 years now but we are still fighting for our basic rights. We still have to struggle to access basic citizenship proofs like birth certificates, ration cards, etc. Our mother's profession is still not recognized as legal and is looked down upon. It's time for us to fight for our mother's rights, because until they get worker's rights, our freedom is meaningless and hollow."



“Just like any other profession, our mothers also give services to their customers in exchange of money. They work hard to earn and provide a decent livelihood to their children and extended family. We demand worker rights for our mothers and it is only when their work gets accepted as any other work, that we would be FREE from stigma and discrimination, without that how we could enjoy full freedom and dignity,” he added.

Another member, Shampa Basak from Shantipur said that, “In last 10 years the government has introduced various initiatives for the children but none of them are focused towards children of sex-workers’. Sadly we are still not accepted by the society as equals. People still make fun of us and make it difficult to continue with schooling, social mixing, career building with due respect and freedom to choose options of our choice.”

Bharati Dey, secretary of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) said that, “Our children are often discriminated and stigmatized because they live in red light districts and stigma attached to mother’s profession. Moreover, unlike other children, they don’t carry their father’s name what makes it even more difficult in our patriarchal society. Their identity is questioned at all levels and they have to struggle their way to the mainstream society.”



“It’s time to change the outlook and get equal rights as citizens of this country for our community,” she added.

With an aim to break the shackles, Amra Padatik organized this rally to reach out to the society at large and make their voices heard.

AIDS Momentum 2022- DMSC response to protect National Aids Control Organisation towards HIV/AIDS

As an unusual impact of “minimum government, maximum governance”, the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) is about to merge with the NHM program of Health Department, Govt. of India, which means that it will no longer be an independent division. Since nearly two decades NACO has vowed to serve the population struck by HIV/AIDS through making policies as well as providing anti retro viral therapy to nearly four lakhs HIV infected people with care and support.

In reaction to such decision taken by the government of India, the marginalized and at-risk populations and those living with HIV and AIDS, strongly condemned it and consequently the AIDS Momentum 2022- a city campaign to protect India’s response towards HIV/AIDS has been forged.

AIDS Momentum 2022 is a national campaign led by community-based organizations of marginalized communities bearing the brunt of the AIDS epidemic and engaged actively as leaders in providing prevention, care and support services to those at risk and living with the virus.

The campaign planned to organize consultation meetings in several cities in India to cooperate with the government, to preserve and fully carry out an effective and evidence-based HIV program in India which will help maintain and consolidate the gains so far. The first consultation was held at Chennai on August 23, 2014 and the second at Bhubaneswar on August 26, 2014 followed by Kolkata on 1st September 2014, and planned to be held in four other cities, such as Delhi, Guwahati, Ahmadabad and Mumbai.

On 1st September 2014, at the Academy of Fine Arts, the city consultation was organised by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, Alliance India and All India Network of Sex Workers. There were over 60 participants from different CBOs, NGOs representing Sex Workers, Transgenders, Injecting Drug Users and MSM from the states of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar present there.

Issues such as rise in infections and discrimination in several pockets of India, absence of the prevention and crisis management services, re-marginalization of the high risk community, the ability of government health providers in delivering services on an emergency basis, were raised in the consultation.

A detailed timeline as an action plan for the succeeding three years had been confronted and talked about in the confluence, which stated to include a Preparatory phase from 2014 to gather allies and to provide trainings. In Campaign Phase of 2015 the contemplation will be given to the coalition of the members of KP groups and others. The process will serve the objective of mobilizing the policy makers, government functionaries including political parties, media, civil societies and other opinion makers.

In order to congregate the reaction of the beneficiaries to such verdict, the Sonagachi Research and Training Institute conducted a survey in Sonagachi with 50 female sex workers (FSW). The survey findings show that 96% of the total population had no clue about the decision prior to participating in the survey. 50% FSWs showed their denial to accept the decision and another 30% informed that they will do something against the verdict. 86%-88% of the sex workers informed that they are not ready to access services from the government outlets of hospitals such as condom, treatment of STIs. More than 90% of the population expressed that incidence of violence, stigma and discrimination and acquiring HIV infections will be increased in absence of proper deliverables.

The Consultation ended up with few major concerns and key actions that will be implemented in due course to prevent government to take such verdict.

- A memorandum will be developed to organize such campaigns in different states.
- A consultation meeting will be planned with the State AIDS Control Societies and District AIDS and the District AIDS Prevention and Control Unit to hold the verdict to come into action.
- A forum and a Google Group of CBOs will be developed in order to ensure uninterrupted and regular communication among all.
- Development of reports and documents in order to make coalition with other CBOs and concern activists.
- A Policy document will be developed in order to mobilize the government functionaries as well as community stakeholders.

- More number of surveys and researches will be conducted in different states to gather the response of community, which will be presented before government to rethink.
- Campaigns, March, Protest, Signature campaigns to change the attitude of the government towards the untoward merging.
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Anandam organised a training program on Dental Dam

On 21st August 2014 at 12/5, Nilmoni Mitra Street a one day training program on Dental Dam was organized by Anandam, the collective of MSM and transgender community of Kolkata who are still active in the field of HIV/ AIDS to prevent the violence from police and other perpetrator as well as their carrying out advocacy with policy makers to address stigma and discrimination. The event mainly focused on protecting the sexual health of the community members and indulging in more safe sex. The LGBTKH (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Koti and Hijras) members who involve in oral sex and other type of practicing sexual activities who are more prone and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and STIs and Hepatitis B. The objective of the training was to help them to comprehend issues of HIV transmission and how better they can protect themselves in practicing sex (both oral and anal) with a view to reduce transmission of HIV and STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection).

The community members were overwhelmed by the information emitted in the sessions. More than 30 participants were there in the training. The program also motivated few of the community people to become members of the organization.

Upcoming Events:

Durbar Band's First Musical Album is in its way for Release

The famous Bengali band "Kaya" collaborated with "Durbar Band", in the release of the first music album of "Durbar Band" on 25th September 2014 in a public gathering at Mohit Moitro Mancha.

In January 2014, the Kaya band members came across the lead singers of Durbar Band and children of sex workers as well. After a daylong meeting with Durbar Band they decided to help them launch their first music album with support of Hindustan Music Record Company. Despite of having immense talent in voice presentation Durbar Band could not do much with it so far. "We did local shows but fusion with such well-known band is an honor for the children of sex workers" said Ratan Dolui, the lead vocalist of Durbar Band. He also added, that this collaboration with Kaya Band can offer a fresh turn to the spirit of these youngsters.

There are eight songs in this music album written by Shampa Chakrobarty.

Sex Workers denied permission to host Durga Puja

Sex Workers from different red light districts of West Bengal wanted to reorganize durga puja in several other fields based on the last year success. The Durga puja of Sonagachi received a special Jury award from Anandabazar Patrika.

The sex workers of south Kolkata's Kalighat, Boubazar in north Kolkata, Seoraphuli in Hooghly district, Durgapur in Burdwan district and Bishnupur in Bankura district wished to host Puja but was refused by the administration. Barring Bishnupur, the police have denied permission in other places and asked them to obtain the permission either from the Calcutta High Court or from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. . For the puja at Sonagachi, too, officials from the police headquarters at Lalbazar informed that the sex workers were not allowed to set up a pandal outside the office. This shows the discriminatory attitude towards sex workers.

Pointing out to the police's discriminatory attitude, Dr. Jana said such behavior is a setback for sex workers and disables them from joining the mainstream, at a time when efforts are being made to remove the stigma of their occupation.

Editor: Smarajit Jana

Bulletin team: Mousumi Chowdhury (Dam) and Madhusree Das

Published by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, 44 Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata - 700006, India /www.durbar.org /for feedback: durbar.communication@gmail.com For facebook: www.facebook.com/durbar.mahila

