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# Durbar Bulletin -46

## Amra Padatik pleading against terrorist attack in Peshwar

On December 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, Amra Padatik, an organization of sex-worker's children in association with Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee took out a silent procession and held demonstrations from Sonagachi to College Street to condemn the worst-ever terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar and express solidarity with the armed forces in the ongoing war against terrorism.

The rally saw the participation of more than 800 members of Amra Padatik. More than 800 children walked together to mourn the loss of 132 innocent lives in Peshawar. "We oppose the heinous act of terrorism by Taliban and would stand against any act of terror. Why did they kill the children, what was their fault?" asked Shampa Basak, 16-year-old member of Amra Padatik.



Ratan Dolui, Secretary of Amra Padatik said that, "This act is a shame to humanity. How could they shoot the children at point blank, did they have no human emotions? Why should the children be made victims of violence and terrorism?"

Dr Smarajit Jana, Chief Advisor to DMSC said that, "This incident shows that our social fabric and the sense of humanity is at the crossroad. We need to rethink where our society is heading to? Terrorism is a manifestation underlying many social evils entangled in our social and political milieu including social inaccessibility to social justice system what requires global attention."

The main congregation was held at College Street where the children lit candles and prayed for the martyred souls of the Peshawar tragedy.

## **Durbar Celebrated 'Sabar Adhikar Dibosh'**

Birsha Munda Gram Unnayan Committee (an organization of Sabar) with active support from Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee celebrated sabar Adhikar Dibosh in Amlasole on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

In 2005, the organization of Sabar declared 30<sup>th</sup> December as 'Sabar Dibosh' and henceforth every year Durbar is supporting celebration of Sabar Adhikari Dibosh in Amlasole. This year Durbar organized a 4 daylong event to celebrate the day.

The programme started from 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 where a two days Soccer competition (Sabar Cup) was organized which was participated by 24 team representing Sabar and Munda communities of West Bengal and Jharkhand.

On 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 along with Soccer Competition other games like Handi Bhanga, musical chair, 800 meter race, archery tournament etc were organized for women and kids.

On 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 the final match of football and archery competition took place where hundreds of men, women and children arrive at the ground to lend their support for respective team. Various eminent personalities like member of Panchayat Samity, representatives of Amlasole Yuva kalia Samity, representatives of Birsha Munda Gram Unnayan Committee were also present in the program.

## **Durbar organized Medical Camp on Malnutrition Assessment**

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee organized two-day medical camp at Sonagachi and Khidirpore in association with GOAL India. The objective of the camp was to assess the prevalence of malnutrition among the children of 0-6 years in Sonagachi and Khidirpore. A door to door survey was held prior to the camp.

Children from age group of 0-6 years attended the camp and were attended by doctors and other staff of the project. Through a proper systemic method using electronic weight machine and Anthropometry Rod, weight and height of the children were respectively assessed. Apart from this presence various symptoms of malnutrition and signs of childhood diseases like Bitot's spot, oedema, presence of stomatitis were also assessed in this camp.

## **Exchange of ideas and experience of learning on Development and Women's empowerment between Durbar and UPENN**

Development debates in India are currently in flux with important implications for the practice and analysis of gender and development; Some argue for market-driven, neo-liberal solutions to gender equality, while others believe that equitable gender relations will only come when women (and men) are empowered to understand their predicament and work together to find local solutions to improve their lives. Empowerment and human rights approaches are also popular among development practitioners, particularly those concerned with gender equity.

The Gender and Development course uses the context of development to critically engage with some of the issues important to development planners, national leaders and women's groups throughout India.

Keeping this in view Durbar along with IGNOU has initiated a 2 years course on Gender and Development studies. The university of Upenn started similar program since 2014.

The exposure visits of UPENN with course name 'Gender and Development in South Asia under Credit Units (C.U.) in India Program' was scheduled to be held on 25-30 December 2014.

The objective of this exchange program was to enable learners to learn and comprehend the practical approaches and strategies of gender development focusing women as one of the important element of gender equity and how a section of marginalized communities could make a difference.

The team from UPENN was distributed into groups of their respective field of interest and they communicated with the representatives of Durbar leaders. Field visit was organized in the red light districts of Sonagachi in groups followed by interactive sessions with Peer workers, Counselors outreach workers and other staff members of the health program. The team also visited the brothels and interacted with the general sex workers and asked about their behavior, mind set and vulnerabilities manifested in the profession and their choice of accepting sex work. The students were of different opinion when they visited the Brothels and interacted with the sex workers. It was an unlearning and relearning experience for them. During the wrap up sessions they shared their experiences which have left them to ponder over issues related to sex workers that they had not inkling before. A session was also coordinated with the LGBTQ leaders of West Bengal. . The program was declared to end with a note to find out possible mechanism and steps to be undertaken to build partnership between DMSC and UPENN.

### **An Exposure Visit to Maharashtra Co-operative Society**

Representatives of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee and USHA Co-operative society had recently visited co-operative societies of Maharashtra, situated in districts of Pune, Godot and Gujarat from 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

Altogether 7 participants from USHA and 4 from DMSC was part of the visiting team. As planned they visited Annapurna Mahila Industrial Co-operative society, in Gujarat, Grahak Peth in Maharashtra, Amul Swad in Gujarat, Adivasi Krishi Udyog in north Gujarat, Varna Bazar in Kolhapur and few others.

The leadership of sex workers community from Sonagachi who mobilized their colleagues to develop Co-operative societies of their own, as early as 1995 and registered as USHA Co-operative to ensure economic sustainability of sex workers. Later on it has marked as the most successful cooperative society of sex workers in south Asia owned and managed by the sex workers. Very recently USHA has triumphed as "Best Mahila Co-operative Award" in West Bengal.

However to get exposed to other successful venture in cooperative movement USHA decided to visit those co-operative with an view to known and learn their history or

development strategies to expand and how they could enable and empower women in particular. The other objective was to create a viable platform among the co-operative societies in India who share same or similar values across India. It has been decided that a meeting would be held at Kolkata during the 20<sup>th</sup> year celebration of USHA Co-operative Society where representatives from co-operative societies so far visited by the joint team of USHA and DMSC will be initiated to open a dialogue to build a platform for strengthen co-operative movement in India.

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