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Durbar Bulletin -48

Facilitating change by learning

Amra Padatik- the organization of the children of sex workers are growing day by day with increasing membership in across the state of West Bengal. The organization is trying to bring changes in the life of children of sex workers including change in risk taking behaviour and practices. They are trying to make the children understand about the importance of education, enhancing educational and other career building opportunities for them. Very recently a Researcher team from Tata Institute of Social Studies visited DMSC and tried to assess dynamics of the community with special focus to the children of sex workers. The TISS team took couple of days to learn the social perspectives, issues and challenges of children of sex workers. They conducted separate focused group discussion with the adolescent girls and boys to gauge their aspiration about their life. The representatives of Amra Padatik discussed about early marriage, career building opportunities and a number of other issues. The research team visited all other related stakeholders including the sex workers. During discussion with the sex workers, it was revealed that they also hold the traditional patriarchal view as other members of the society. The elderly sex workers understood the importance of the education but they express extreme insecurity to live with their adolescent children in the red light area. Their main fear is the social vices prevalent in the area and the stigma and discrimination attached with sex work. Interview with the police showed their extreme apathetic view towards the sex workers and their children. The local club members, who are primarily the children of sex workers are very much politically polarized and interestingly believes in the traditional patriarchal moralistic view about the sex workers. The team also met number of service providers in different red light districts including Anganwadi Centres, Hospitals etc. At the end of the visit Amra Padatik was able to chalk out their organizational goal and action plan to address social attitude and practices against sex workers.

Reader-Writers meet to retrospect Durbar Bhavna..

Durbar Bhavna- the monthly magazine published from Durbar Prakashani (the publication wing of DMSC) organized a reader-writer meet on 21st February 2015 at Udayachal Guest House Saltlake. The objective of the meet was to introspect the role of Durbar Bhabna in spreading social awareness on relevant issues. Peoples from different walks of the society

including social activists, writers, journalists, editors were present in the meet. During the first half of the meet discussion was focused around various suggestions and recommendations from the readers. There was suggestion to change the name of the magazine and the language of While these, Dr. Editor Durbar commented magazine is not publicize activities. published to democratic



also to simplify the magazine. answering Smarajit Jana, Bhabna, that this a journal to DMSC's Rather it was create a space for

individuals to express their views and opinions on a range of social issues. During the second half of the session the discussion was focused on the success and failure of various social movements which was initiated in late Seventies. Those movements started with an ideology of equity and equality with an aim to bring progressive change in the society. Durbar Bhavna as a magazine would try to cover the fall out effect of those activities in addition to the present scenario of those movements, their achievements and challenges. It is important to retrospect because, whether those movements are directed to bring changes and also to assess possible the impact of those movement in the lives of people. The meet was successful in drawing interest in terms of interaction and exchange between readers and writers.

Durbar extended helping hand to ensure safety and security of sex worker and their children of Nagpur

Nearly 100 year old Ganga Jamuna red light district in Nagpur is presently in the verge of eviction due to the police intimidation and actions carried out by a set of people who want 'sanitize' Nagpur. Lying factors so far identified showed that a nexus between land mafia and builders lobby is the true culprit behind this eviction. The heavy deployment of police force prevents customers from entering into the area which affects the sex workers livelihood and other basic rights including access to health services rendered by the Indian Red Cross Society which runs an HIV prevention project in the area. The sex workers of the area reported that the police falsely prosecuting them under the various sections of Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) putting future of their children in the dark as they are compelled to remain away from schools.

On 25th February 2015, a team from Durbar rushed to Nagpur to support the Indian Red Cross and the sex workers in the brothel area. They assessed the facts of the situation; educate local stakeholders about the laws related to sex work, and the relevance of the law (ITPA) which covertly or overtly ignites possible evictions of sex workers from brothel settings.

Durbar's visit was supported by the Alliance India office Delhi. The team also explained the importance of community mobilization and formation of their own CBO. They also described how the sex workers of Sonagachi, Kolkata came together as a collective community to fight against police harassment as early as 1990's.

On 1st March 2015, getting support from Durbar and Red Cross Society, the sex workers of Ganga-Jamuna took a bold decision and submitted a mass petition to the Minister of Maharashtra Mr. Chandrashekhar Bawankulu at Koradi. The minister was briefed about the stark situation of the area due to the police raid as well as various violence perpetrated by

them among the sex workers. The Minister accepted the petition and suggested them to adopt legal help. For the advocacy purpose the team also met with the local MLA and local influential people.

On the very next day i.e., on 2nd March 2015, the team again met and submitted mass petition before the Commissioner of Police against police violence. Hema (name changed), a sex worker of the area informed that due to police harassment many HIV positive sex workers stopped accessing ART treatments and went underground, thus leading more harm to the entire society. Commissioner assured them to talk about the problem with the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Annual General Meeting (2015) of Durbar at Digha

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the most important meeting of the year and the main objective of the meeting was to review the work of the previous year and future activities to be undertaken by the organization. Like every year this year also Durbar organized AGM at Digha from 24th February to 27th February 2015. The meeting was attended by approximately 70 general sex workers representing different red light districts as well as around 550 workers of Durbar.

During the 4 daylong meeting, the following issues were discussed and planned accordingly to incorporate the decisions in the year long activities of the organization through different discussions and presentations:

- Expansion of the organization through inclusion of more general sex workers
- Identify young leadership from the community
- Expand networking of Durbar at the State as well as in the neighboring state (where it has not started as yet)
- Establish and strengthen SRB in different red light districts of West Bengal.
- Ensure and encourage the involvement of more children of sex workers as well as other marginalized community members in sports through Durbar Sports Academy
- to strengthen Anandam (LGBT community)
- The grand plan of action to celebrate the 20th year of USHA Multipurpose Cooperative Society in 2015

After reviewing the achievements and failure of the work of the previous year, Dr. Smarajit Jana (Chief Advisor, Durbar) and Ms. Bharati Dey (Secretary) congratulated the staff of Durbar for the achievements and regarding failure Ms. Bharati Dey said that the staff should be given more training to increase their skill so that they can work efficiently. Mr. Sekhar Basu Mallick who has been associated with Durbar from a long period was also present in the meeting, said that he was very glad to see the new faces of general sex workers in the meeting which would be definitely a good sign for the development of the community.

Other invitee for the AGM was Mr. Abhijit Choudhury who deliver a lecture on Right to Information Act and how it could be utilized by DMSC to uphold their rights. Among other dignitaries where Dr. Abhijit Mitra a long associate of Durbar and Mr. Tapan Roy, ex-Advisor of USHA.

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