

15th June 2016



Durbar Bulletin -63

International Menstrual Hygiene Day celebration in Sonagachi

This year, for the third time Amra Padatik (the organization of and the children of sex workers) in association with Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) celebrated International Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day) on 28th May 2016.

The day is an annual to break taboos and the importance of Menstrual Hygiene for girls.

On this occasion, Amra organised an awareness in the red light district program advocated the napkin usage and associated with an interesting programmes followed



awareness day that aims raise awareness about maintaining good women and adolescent

Padatik and DMSC and advocacy program of Kalighat, Kolkata. The importance of sanitary various myths menstruation through 'edutainment'

by a street play

performed the team members of Komol Gandhar. The play was centring around the importance of sanitary napkin usage and societal taboos linked to menstruation.

Ms. Pooja Roy, Secretary, Amra Padatik gave an insight on the importance of maintaining proper hygiene during menstruation. "Usually we use untidy and torn leftover clothes repeatedly which can lead to serious health hazards. Majority of girls are at risk for Reproductive Tract Infection (RTI) because of poor Menstrual Hygiene." Ms. Roy mentioned in her speech.

The event was attended by Ishita Mukhapadhyay, Director, Women Studies Research Centre, University of Calcutta and Mitali Palodhi, Vice President of Indian Dietetic Association and many other eminent personalities from different walks of life.

Ms. Mitali Palodhi in her speech said that despite the fact that menstruation is a healthy and natural biological process, social approaches to this phenomenon is mixed with judgmental and non scientific belief and practices. This is because of deeply-rooted cultural taboos surrounding menstruation. In many traditional Hindu homes in India, girls and

women face restrictive taboos and misconception relative into menstruation, such as being denied entry to the temple and in the kitchen.” It’s high time we should come forward and raise our voice against the taboos surrounding menstruation,” she again added.

Ishita Mukhapadhyay commented that Menstrual hygiene day is meant to serve as a platform to bring together individuals, organisations and the media to create a united and strong voice for women and girls around the world, helping to break the silence around menstruation and its proper management related practices.

Awareness on Water Conservation in Sonagachi through sit and draw Competition

92.7 BIG FM, India’s No. 1 Radio Network in association with Durbar conducted a sit and draw competition on water conservation ‘PaniBachao, Life Banao’ (Save water, Save Life) on 4th June 2016 for the children of sex workers in Sonagachi Red Light District.

178 children including the children of sex workers, children of other marginalized communities as well as children from the main stream society participated in the competition to skills by depicting Bachao, Life Banao’ the future growing water country and taking awareness and to empathy on the conservation in the competition invited children of the age years.



exhibit their creative the theme ‘Pani through art. To alert generation about the crisis across the onus of spreading generate a sense of significance of water young minds, the participation from group from 4- 16

The creativity of children came to fore at ‘Pani Bachao, Life Banao’ painting competition. Children made colourful drawings with appropriate and thought provoking slogans which acted as a wake-up call and reinforced the need to take some action to save precious Water. The paintings were beautifully decorated and children displayed their creativity and imagination. The ‘Pani Bachao, Life Banao’ competition gave the children a platform to showcase their talent and made them realize the importance of water in their lives.

Participants were judged on different measures like, relevance to theme, neatness and presentation. Students enjoyed the competition and produced amazing artwork and participated earnestly in the competition.

Amra Padatik Celebrated 10 years of its journey

This year Amra Padatik (an organization of sex workers children) celebrated 10 years of its journey through a gala evening in Sonagachi on 31st May 2016.

Amra Padatik celebrated its birthday with a traditional cake cutting program. Many eminent personalities from various sectors of the society were present in the program. Tanjila Khatun (President of Amra Padatik), Mitali Palodhi, (Vice President of Indian Dietetic Association) Puja Roy (Secretary of Amra Padatik), Dr. Smarajit Jana (Chief Advisor of DMSC), Dr. A.K.Singh (medical doctor serving in the area), Aparna Banarjee (Leader of Transgender Community), Daimantri Roy (Headmistress of Oriental Seminari for Girls),

Bansibadan Chatterjee (Lecturer of IGNOU), Prof. Kalyan Bhattacharya and Ashok Dutta were present in the program.

In this program they also felicitated the children who have successfully passed Secondary and Higher Secondary Examination this year. 10 meritorious students were felicitated with a token of money, books, sweets and bouquet. Two of them are the students of Rahul Vidya Niketan(a residential home for the sex workers' children in Baruipur) and the others hailed from the red light districts of Khidirpur, Boubazar, Kalighat and Sonagachi.

When asked about their mother, they said, “ *mora ek sutoy badha aaachi ma o santan, maa amader noyon moni amra tader pran*”(we, mother and child are knotted with the same thread, mother is our soul and we are their life).

For the past decade Amra Padatik is relentlessly working to ensure access rights and social justice for the children of the sex worker's community. They are fighting to minimize the stigma and discrimination attached to sex work and sex workers. In the past years Amra Padatik has been successful to preventing school dropout among the children. They are also fighting to prevent various social vices like early marriage, substance abuse, child labour, child sexual abuse and others.

Dr. Smarajit Jana(Chief Advisor and founder of Durbar) in his speech mentioned, “There was a time when sex workers were unable to get their children admitted in the formal school and even if anyone get admitted into the school they had to face various kinds of stigma and discrimination. To exterminate this problem we have established a residential home at Baruipur for the sex workers children. A part from imparting education to them we also provide training on sports, music and dance based on the interest and potential of the children. To run this work effectively we seek help from different individuals and organizations.”

The program ended with a performance of Durbar Band and a dance performance by Komal Gandhar which was enjoyed by few hundred audiences assembled there.

Street Corner at Dumdum

Durbar Disha Mahila Grihasramik Samanwaya Committee organised a street cornering on 9th June 2016 at Bidhan Colony, Dumdum. The program focused on the discussion of the working condition of the domestic workers and also to make them understand the struggle they are facing with and how to motivate them in getting their due rights. A call was also made for the domestic workers to join in the rally which will be conducted on 16th June 2016 on the occasion of International Domestic worker's Day.

Just like other workers, domestic workers began organising themselves since few years back in many parts of the country. For the first time, the National Domestic Workers' Movement (NDWM) was launched in Maharashtra in 1985. Domestic Workers' Collective is now active in 17 states of India but in West Bengal no such union was formed till 2007. There are more than 2 lakhs domestic workers working in the state of West Bengal. In 2008, Durbar for the 1st time formed a domestic workers' union named Durbar Disha Mahila Grihasramik Samanwaya Committee and their after the committee is trying to mobilize domestic workers in different districts in West Bengal for their legitimate demands.

Mr. Prabir Pal, the Councillor of Ward No. 13, Mr. Rabindranath Chakraborty(Convenor of Shramajibi Swikriti Mancha), Mr. Amitabha Chakraborty (member of Swangrami Shramik Mancha), Dr. Suresh Gayen (Member of Swangrami Shramik Mancha), Ms. Atasi Chakraborty (Coordinator, Swangrami Shramik Sthan), Rama Debnath (Karmajibi Mahila Samiti) were present in the program.

Mr. Prabir Pal congratulated their efforts and dedications. He also ensured that he is always there to support and help domestic workers in getting their rights and dignity.

Mr. Rabindranath Chakraborty congratulated all the people of Durbar Disha for their effort and hard work. In his speech he requested domestic workers to be united to achieve their rights.

Ms. Rama Debnath, in her speech said, “We will always stay beside the domestic workers. Many domestic workers are abused in their work places. They are also terminated from their work without any prior notice. So it is very important to get united to raise our voices.”

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Published by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee,

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