

WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

WHAC/31 /2018-19

**Village Sunpeda,
Gannur, Sonepat
November 26, 2018**



In a country that houses 1.85 billion citizens, 78 per cent women still don't use sanitary napkins owing to lack of awareness, access and affordability. Approximately 300 million women rely on unhygienic materials such as old rags to address their sanitation needs during their menstrual cycle.

Oxygen & Sahyog Foundation conducts awareness sessions in schools and rural locations to acquaint young girls and Women with facts about menstruation and the environmental and health impacts. After assessing the immediate need for such session, during our visit at Village Sunpeda, Gannur, Sonepat, Oxygen CSR team organized a workshop at Govt. School Sunpeda on November 26th, 2018. Around 150 girls from Class 9th -12th collect in the verandah (Courtyard) of the School to attend the session.

While introducing the Girls about the session and reason for the Workshop CSR team said "Menstruation, the natural bio-physiological phenomenon in a woman's life cycle, is still considered impure and stigmatized throughout the country, This is clearly reflected in the way the entire concept of menstrual hygiene gets handled, shame, the taboo, lack of access to clean pads or toilet facilities further adds to the challenges and serious health implications."

During the Session we tried the girls to understand that, menstrual issues usually depend on different age groups. Team further explains, "Young girls who have just got their first few periods face with irregular or heavy cycles. Once menses is initiated, it takes about two years to set a fixed cyclical pattern for some girls. Such girls and their mothers need to be reassured." Heavy cycles lasting for a long time happen to a small fraction of young girls, who can meet up with a health care provider and help themselves with medications.

Further we also added that Women in the reproductive age group tend to have heavy periods either due to hormonal fluctuations or due to fibroids. Polycystic ovarian syndrome affects about one in five women with irregular cycles, weight gain and hair growth and reproductive tract infections are 70 per cent more likely in women, who use unhygienic materials during their periods.

After the complete description of Why & how Periods happen, we summarized the session with "Menstruation is a physiological cyclical event in a woman during her reproductive years. Experts opine that



menstruation should not be stigmatized in any way as it will make young girls feel deprived or underprivileged when compared to the opposite gender”.



“In the present day, it is important for each one of us including healthcare providers to stress the need for girls and women to go ahead with routine activities during periods,” “Lack of awareness is quite rampant in the rural areas. Poverty, overwork, lack of education and basic needs are the probable reasons for a higher incidence in the rural areas. Women in urban areas seem to be more aware, thanks to the networking of women and media as well.”



We further added, “It is essential that girls at a young age are taught how to contain menstrual blood and how to dispose them as well. This education can be imparted through schools, Parents, peer group or by media. Lack of awareness and ignorance can cause infection in the private parts.”

I think it is time that the society breaks out of the taboo that is associated with women and their menstruation cycle. This is just a step closer to what we envision towards a world where both women and men are aware and consider it a very important conversation that they need to have.”

Seema Khurana

Lead & CSR Activist