



WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

WHAC/37/2018-19

Kahsim Vihar, Loni Ghaziabad

December 27, 2018

On 27th Dec 2018 When Oxygen CSR team arrived at Kahsim Vihar slum , Loni , Ghaziabad, U.P Ngo center Samvati Shiksha Sansthan ,More than 70 Women sitting at the Terrace of the center were curiously waiting for the team , while enjoying the sun on a chilly day. This isn't the first drive held by CSR team, but they also got excited and introduced themselves and began the session with the aim to raise awareness about menstrual hygiene in underprivileged parts of city, under the slogan 'Women Hygiene awareness Drive'.

After a quick ice-breaking session, CSR Activist from Oxygen & Sahyog Foundation asked the women gathered about their experiences of having periods. Many said periods had become a part of their lives so they just dealt with them, but one said that she could not wait for old age to get rid of them. Following this, the women were given all the appropriate information about periods and the transformation of a woman's body during puberty. The focus was on menstrual management, puberty and associated physical, emotional and behavioral changes. It was explained to the women that the blood gets passed out of the body when the egg isn't fertilized in the uterus.

Breaking down some of the myths, Team asked the audience about 'dos' and don'ts' during periods. Many women unanimously agreed that drinking cold water was a big no while some of them staunchly believed in not taking a bath during the cycle. "I have been told by a lady doctor that drinking cold water during periods can lead to cramps," Nagma. She was told in response that cramps vary in women due to different reasons but consuming cold water had no relation to it. Another participant said that taking a bath should be avoided because water can enter the body through the vagina, leading to its swelling. Sumaira debunked this by explaining to the participant that the vagina does not expand during periods, thus water cannot enter the body through it on any given day, thanks to the way human anatomy is shaped.

Knowing that many women use cloth rather than sanitary towels due to cost, Team didn't discourage the practice. They advised the women to wash the cloth they use properly, dry it under direct sunlight and iron it before the next use to make sure that it doesn't breed any infections.

During the session Project Coordinator from SSS added that after realizing that majority of the women living in this impoverished areas have little to no knowledge about menstrual hygiene owing to lack of access to facilities. Even the privileged shy away from a discussion on menstrual health, therefore it is important to educate all kinds of women about their periods so that they can manage them better.

Team Further added that “Women who do not have access to clean water are the ones who face immense problems because their day-to-day lives get affected by this lack”. The idea of this initiative was to provide them with a safe space where they can discuss their problems without the fear of being judged. Explaining the idea further, team said that it was about making education about women’s bodies more accessible to those women who have don’t have enough sources of knowledge.

During our sessions, we teach healthy management of period blood and remove the aspect of shame from the natural phenomenon. This enables girls and women to feel more confident about their bodies during menstruation and reduces the chances of missing out on school days and work. Of course, there are other reasons as well. Lack of clean water and proper washrooms in schools also become one of the major reasons why girls miss school during their period. We are reaching women in the rural & slum areas in remotes and hope to target many more to let all women know that periods are natural and women can be empowered if they are given information about the autonomy of their body.

Seema Khurana

CSR Lead & activist