

WHAC/6/2019-20

**JJ Cluster, Meera Bagh,
May 16th, 2019**

WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

There is an alarming lack of awareness about menstrual hygiene and even after decades, there is still a stigma associated with discussing periods, a natural biological function. Oxigen & Sahyog foundation has been trying to de-stigmatize menstruation by talking openly about it through awareness sessions in Communities (Slum/Rural / Urban), NGO's and Schools.

On May 16th, 2019 afternoon Oxigen & Sahyog Foundation team reached a JJ cluster at Meera Bagh where around 70 women & girls were waiting to meet them. The session began with educating the girls and women about how they should take care of themselves during their menstrual cycles, what products to use, and what products to stay away from and why they should steer clear of random drugs and menstrual hygiene products we see in commercials among other things. While discussing all these we found that in the community, people have very little knowledge about health issues and government schemes which talks about reproductive and sexual health with young girls and boys to create a safe space so that at least in the community people knew that they could talk about these things. It's very interesting to find that in the areas there was no taboo as such in a visual sense regarding Menstruation since they all are from different backward states of India and are here to earn their livelihood.



During the session we realized that the conversation on menstrual health was very new to the girls. Initially they laughed about it and even say they could not sleep. I realized that their understanding of periods is very different. For these girls, there was a fear factor that was involved. After starting to menstruate, a lot of young girls were also dropping out of schools. So we also spoke about anaemia, importance of healthy diet, about how this is tied to maternal and then child malnourishment Asha workers from the community were also present during the session while talking about health facilities available in the slum -maternal health was the

answer .There was a provision that the ASHA workers were supposed to distribute pads and charge the girls Rs.6, but the pad never reached the workers in time. Moreover ASHA workers do not have any added incentives to talk about menstrual issues and neither do they have the training to conduct these sessions, Policy only looks at maternal health. While speaking to the ASHA workers about conducting

menstrual sessions, they say that they can only talk about what they know as they don't have any training. The girls in the community completely deny any such sessions happening, they simply say they don't go and that it is never discussed. Along with giving lesson and medical tips, also provides sanitary pads samples. Girls clear their doubts and ask questions on behalf of their mother and sisters also. Menstruation should not be treated as a 'women's issue'. It has to be linked to the public health discourse. It can be a dilemma sometimes but I think it is important for the government to discuss these things too. With these words and a promise to come back again we took a leave.



Seema Khurana
CSR Lead & Activist