

WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

WHAC/28/2019-2020

Govt School, Molar band, Badarpur

October 21st, 2019

On October 21st 2019 morning I was once again at Govt School I at Molar Band, Badarpur for conducting an awareness session for the 525 girls from class 6-8th Std. This time the School Principal gave a call to Oxigen & Sahyog Foundation CSR team to organise a workshop for these girls under Swachah Bharat Mission

The Swachh Bharat Mission is one of the most promoted goals in India. When we talk about this mission we think about clean roads, clean public places, toilets, Oscar level acting by celebrities and politicians sweeping the floor, etc. But we always tend to ignore one of the core elements of this mission – menstrual hygiene! It's not our fault, the government and those in influential positions ignore it too!

Our session opened with the words “why is this topic ignored”? It is as normal as breathing! I fail to find the logic behind stigmatizing this matter. It is because of this reason people and specially women don't say it directly but indirectly like, “happy birthday aaya hai,” (it's your birthday today) “woh wale din” (that time of the month) and what not!

While describing the process of Menstruation, How it happens and why it happens we discussed with the girls that if you think menstruation is gross than don't forget that this 'impure' blood is utilized for the development of a child (from zygote to foetus) inside the mother's womb! When fertilization doesn't happen, the same blood lining breaks down and get released from the vagina, the process of which is called menstruation. Oh no! Did I just make some people feel bad about them? But that's the reality, so it is better to change your mentality as soon as possible!

Discussion with the girls bring forward that girls remain unaware of their own menarche because parents or elders don't even talk to them beforehand. The situation becomes worse when at that time no female member is around to guide her.





Girls admit that most of them use cloth and locally prepared napkins! It's because of the lack of awareness and culture of the sanitary napkins and other modern alternatives. Few of the girls shared that "my elder family members still use cloth because they follow orthodox culture and don't want to change their mindset". This shows that it is not always about affordability. While discussing about the various Government schemes launched by the central government, which make sanitary napkins available to

them. But the main problem is with the quality. The qualities of those sanitary napkins are so bad that women rather prefer cloth because they think that it's better to use a cloth rather than having rashes and infections! The quality of sanitary napkins given by the schools is the worst. They give the cheapest sanitary pads available. Forget even about the quality, majority of the schools don't even have washrooms and even if they do, they are not hygienic. But the situation isn't great in the case of those using sanitary napkins either. Most wear a sanitary pad throughout the day without changing it which leads to serious diseases, or they don't know how to wear it properly which leads to leakage.

In the logical reasoning session class seven teacher said "Talking about culture, our TV advertisements are to be blamed the most. They never show the reality. They always show blue liquid instead of red! In the advertisement, the conversation is only between women, they never involve men! How will the society change with this kind of approach"?



While wrapping up the session we summarized "It is a blessing to have periods. Ask those who suffer from menstrual problems and you'll know the value of this beautiful and completely natural phenomenon! Get over the orthodox mindset and think about it scientifically. Create awareness around yourselves and sensitize people, especially men".

We need the involvement of more and more men in this matter. I urge the government to promote this openly and focus upon the quality of napkins. I also urge film producers and directors to show these things openly in movies or advertisements. Influential people also need to play an active role to normalize it. At last I would say, why you think menstruation is gross when you, yourselves were born out of the same blood!

Seema Khurana
CSR Lead & Activist