

WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

WHAC/19/2019-20

Village Sarhaul, Gurugram

August 5th, 2019

Menstruation is one subject that still makes most people uncomfortable. Organizing awareness session at Govt School, Sirhul on Aug 5th 2019 CSR team from Oxygen & Sahyog Foundation look at why we do not talk about periods and hesitate to #Say It Loud when it comes to the subject. Taboos around menstruation are deep rooted. "For thousands of years, it has been ingrained into our cultural practices." Because they have been a part of the norm for so long, people are often sensitive about showing disrespect. It has been a part of the cultural baggage for so long, and taboos hence, that it is hard to shake it off and look at it in a different light.

At session with 120 girls in the age of 11-14 as we entered the multipurpose room and started talking about menstruation it was pin drop silence that greet us. Since the girls were uncomfortable talking about menstruation, we tried to educate them why a girl menstruate and its important along with some tips to remain healthy. While describing all also found that girls treat periods as dirty and impure.



There is a consistent belief across India that 'period blood is dirty' which then leads to different manifestations across cultures and incomes like not entering the temple and kitchen, hiding menstrual blood stains, embarrassment in talking about periods etc. So one single belief leads to multiple misconceptions and therein lies the challenge. How do we address these taboos? How do we change the way periods are perceived?

Awareness and education is the best way to break the myths and taboos surrounding menstruation. It is the first step towards changing the present situation. "It is really important for every girl to have access to sex education and know that period blood is the lining of the uterus, so technically every human has lived in that area before being born. How can 'foetus' nutrition be dirty? We try to use this narrative in most school awareness sessions to break this taboo."



While teacher often skim through the chapter on reproduction, menstruation is not even taught in school we tried to help make the connection between science and the essential biological process that women go through every month. We tried all means to make them understand and take ownership of their bodies.

Change can happen not just when women are empowered but even when men are. School coordinator makes a very relevant point when she says, "It is important to impart sex education to boys. India is a patriarchal society and most buying decisions are taken by head of the family or the husbands. Right knowledge about menstruation in women can help in bringing a change in the attitude of family towards menstruating women."

Boys and men need to be educated too.

Despite whatever we do- educate, spread awareness, build products and whatever marketing approach we take, this will take time.

Seema Khurana
CSR Lead & Activist