

WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

WHAC/48/2019-2020

Rise Resort , Construction site

March 2nd, 2020

Oxygen & Sahyog foundation under its CSR is breaking the taboo associated with menstruation

by providing education towards MHM and distributing free sanitary napkins packet. The topic of menstruation brings with it the associated baggage of stigma, and shame. According to a report by Water Aid, 70.9 percent of Indian girls were unaware of what was happening when they got their first period. Schools shy away from teaching students about it, social circles close their doors to the topic, and families maintain radio silence. This has resulted not only in the creation of myths and misconceptions, but also in unsafe and unhygienic practices. It is precisely this taboo that Oxygen & Sahyog foundation tackles through



its Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) awareness campaign. The campaign is spearheaded by CSR activist from Oxygen & Sahyog Foundation. Launched in February 2013, it spanned over Seven years and addressed around 320 Awareness sessions, key issues related to menstrual health in a bid to sensitize both girls and women across all ages.

As reported by Local NGO working as an Anganwadi at Construction site, Rise Resorts in Greater Noida observed that 88 percent of menstruating women in the area were unable to access sanitary napkins. Using old cloth, this hasn't been properly washed or dried, can cause major health problems. However, these issues are swept under the carpet as people are unwilling to talk about them. "We wanted to break the taboo around this issue," explains Prabha Asha



worker. “We wanted to involve everyone in the community, irrespective of age and gender, so that they become more willing to help and take action.” With the help of our Supporting Corporate Oxigen we planned with their CSR team and reached out this construction site workers at Anganwadi near to their workplace on 2nd march 2020 afternoon. Women initially were not ready to talk about the problem and their needs but slowly as we proceeded further they started opening up with queries (with little shyness) to answer their queries about menstruation. We encouraged them to first break the taboo within their own circles. They were asked to share stories about their first period experience with their fellow participants. Though hesitant in the beginning, one by one, women came forward and broke their silence.

From silence to speech “While I always knew what menstruation is, I didn’t really know that it is part of a cycle. I didn’t know why it begins, or how it ends,” confesses Maya one of the workers “During our session, Anganwadi said we learnt there are a number of men who had no idea what the women in their families go through when they are on their period,” she says. “Now that the taboo is starting to break, they are able to talk openly about the issue, and are capable of providing support and help when needed.” Understanding the ‘truth’ about menstruation, we urged women to switch to Sanitary napkins. “We need to think about sustainable approaches before it is too late.” After the session everyone was got a treated and enjoyed the treat with more discussion on MHM.

Seema Khurana
CSR Lead & Activist

