

## WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

WHAC/30/2020-2021

Bhaktavarpur village, G. Noida

February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

It's was a bright February (12th Feb 2021) morning When Team Sahyog Foundation reached Bhaktavarpur Remote village in Greater Noida District Gautam Budh nagar and about 75 women and adolescent girls have assembled to share their experiences about a common and recurring problem they all have to endure but cannot talk about openly. Menstruation is on the agenda for these women, and they are in a place — and a psychological space — where being frank about the subject is welcomed.

Menstruation is, of course and as a matter of course, a normal biological phenomenon that women of reproductive age have to live with. In many parts of India, they also have to live with stigma and silence, shame and ostracization during what is viewed as a period of shunning and separation. The



'menstrual hygiene management' (MHM) program of the Sahyog Foundation is helping change that.

"For five days a month I am not allowed to touch kitchen utensils as I was considered impure; I had to sit outside and eat from a separate plate," says 17 year-old Chandni Solanki, who recalls being 'purified' of the 'contaminants' brought on by her menstrual cycles with sprinklings of cow urine.

The MHM Awareness session addressed by Sahyog foundation tried to touch the lives of rural women and adolescent girls, while also breaking through the thinking of the communities they belong to. Enabling these

women to manage menstruation with more dignity is critical to the endeavor.

Many girls expressed that they are taught from a young age to not talk openly about menstruation. What they learn about in due course is the embarrassment and ignominy that accompanies their menstrual cycles.

"I was told that plants would die if women watered them during their periods," says Sakshi a 14-year-old girl. Knowledge about of puberty and of reproductive health was found very limited during the session. Sanitary napkin, consequently, difficult to find in countless rural communities. Such lack of knowledge and safe menstrual practices often combine to cause ill health and disease.

The three key objectives observed during the session were :educating adolescent girls about their physiology and good hygiene practices; encouraging adult women and girls to adopt hygienic practices and stitch their own cloth pads or use sanitary napkin ; and engaging family members and community towards behavioral change, at the individual and community levels.

The primary challenge for the Team has been in convincing the people who matter most in the program. Women and girls from rural backgrounds are rarely inclined to oppose tradition and the perversity of patriarchal norms but, as the MHM initiative has shown, they will when offer a hand to do so. Resource Person tried to . help each of them understand the nature of menstruation and safe practices to manage it. “Each awareness session is an empowering experience for the women; it enables them to see menstruation as the natural experience it is,” explains CSR head “. “Apart from understanding the science behind menstruation, these sessions help them think logically and question traditional social practices.



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