

WOMEN HYGIENE DRIVE

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Mangroli Village. Noida
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Menstrual Hygiene has remained a taboo subject - stigmatized even amongst practical engineering circles used to dealing with unmentionables such as excreta. Women and girls are de facto water and sanitation managers across the world. **It seems strange then that on an average a women menstruate for 3000 days over their lifetime---with very real, practical needs as regards water and space for washing and cleaning the body, material for absorbing menstrual blood and facilities for proper disposal of used materials so that women can manage this biological function with safety and dignity still are ignored by these organizations .**

As part of its efforts to spread awareness on health and hygiene issues, Pure India with the support of Sahyog Foundation organized menstrual hygiene workshops for adolescent girls and women in Village and Semi urban locations. **On 8th March 2021, the team organized menstrual hygiene workshop at Mangroli Village in Greater Noida reaching out to about 90 Women & Girls in the age group of 15- 45 years.**



Session began with the introduction and the importance of Menstruation in every female life. Soon the session turned as an interactive session as females started asking many questions. In the opening of the session Speaker said "let's talk about Period, sanitary products and every woman's right to bleed with dignity. Speaker also spoke about trying to end the taboo associated with periods and instead we all should talk about it. We need to understand that periods are a normal, natural phenomenon which occurs in females and that there's nothing that they should be embarrassed about.

Session brought out a very important point that "Money is a restraint with which many women face". In rural and semi urban areas, there is always a struggle to arrange the next meal, let alone think about spending money on something which is considered unnatural and bad. "Even in the urban slums, women are not aware about pads or menstrual hygiene," says social worker

Overall, it was a successful interactive session where the girls & Women agreed to purchase sanitary napkins and adapt to the new technology. We hope that over a period our motivators in the community will be able to change their mindset.



To summarize what we have heard from women and girls across the session was:



- Menstruation is not something to be proud of- it is surrounded by silence, shame and social taboos that are further manifested in social practices that in many cultures restrict mobility, freedom and access to normal activities and services
 - Menstruating women and girls – are considered impure, unclean, unfit for the public sphere and are often sequestered during this period. This perception is further exacerbated by the lack of washing and bathing facilities, materials and spaces that can help women and girls manage the menstrual discharge with dignity and safety.
- Hygiene programs ‘teach’ girls and women how to be hygienic without explicitly providing materials, spaces, water and washing agents that cater to menstruation. By ignoring disposal facilities and mechanisms for soiled materials, they reinforce the stigma and shame surrounding menstruation.
 - By talking about gender and user-friendly design but remaining silent about menstruation, programmatic discourse reinforces stereotypes and refrains from breaking taboos and a view of the world that systematically ignores female users.
 - Girls fall behind in their studies, are unable to learn due to abdominal pain and MHM related stress and often eventually drop out or do not continue to secondary school as the onset of puberty and changes in their bodies are unmatched by facilities and a conducive environment.
 - The onus of managing menstruation is on women and girls. They are asked to do this silently and in a way in which society at large can deny the phenomenon itself. Talking about it is shameful and indecent.

At the end we once again compiled the factors leading to these difficulties- lack of awareness, lack of hygienic sanitary pads, lack of toilets with water & soap and lack of drying areas for cloths used for menstrual hygiene management followed by Free Sanitary napkin packet distribution to each Participant.

I wonder why the issue of menstrual hygiene management continues to be neglected. Is it because female voices are not heard within the family, town, health service, government, or intervention programs?

Seema Khurana
CSR Lead& Activist

