

Netaji Subhas Open University

School of Professional Studies

REPORT

Women Awareness Programme held at Mahila Aronyo Sundari Mahasangha, Jhargram on 30 March 2018

Netaji Subhas Open University has been organizing Extension education programmes on various social issues from time to time. The University organizes such programmes with a noble view to sensitize the community about various social issues and become an agent to bring about sustainable development in our society.

Most of these Extension Programmes were conducted for the people who belong to the marginalized segment of our society or are not able to solve their problems by their own. Such people are unable to even identify the social problems and become easy victim to it as they lack awareness and are still in the clutches of age old traditional practices, which may be detrimental for their social wellbeing.

These programmes are conducted with the view to make people know about their Rights and Entitlements and also equip them to protest against anything wrong done to them and focuses on uplifting social awareness of the community people, thereby helping them to bargain for their legitimate rights. All these are done to improve their social skills, interpersonal relationships amongst their fellow people and make them more responsible in taking their own decision and enhance their capacity to solve their problems. Thus the idea behind conducting these programme is to make our society Right Based and help the people to live Self Respect and dignity.

The learners of MSW Course, under the guidance of the counsellors of NSOU organised themselves under the banner, named *RITUSAKHA* to build up awareness about the Menstrual Health amongst the adolescent girls and women of our society.

The learners while conducting their Field work, as a part of MSW Curriculum, observed that there still exist several myths, taboos, superstition amongst a larger number of people in our society. Not only women but even men also promote such vices within the communities and to which young and adolescent girls often become easily victimised. The learners made another very interesting observation, that most of the young adolescent girls were not vocal about their problems due to their ignorance and shyness and even if they feel like sharing about it they are not allowed to do so.

The learners who were really concerned about this issue, forms a group and identified the area in which they thought they could meet the maximum number of adolescent girls to organize an awareness camp on this very sensitive issue. They established contact with the secretary of a registered NGO named “*Mahila Aronyo Sundari Mahasangha*“ situated in Jhargram ,West Bengal. The learners explained the secretary of the NGO about their objective of their programme, and the secretary happily agreed to cooperate with them.

Thus with the aim to promote awareness about the better menstrual hygiene practise amongst the women folk of our community, this group work of learners, from the Department of Social Work, NSOU organized an outreach programme on 30th March, 2018 along with the support of the staff of Mahila Aronyo Sundari Mahasangha Jhargram. The participants where mainly the teenaged girls and college going girl students, who were accompanied by their mothers. The mothers were requested to organize themselves in a separate group, while the girls were made to form another group.

In order to understand the level of knowledge of the participants about the problem, the Participatory Rural Appraisal technique was conducted and it was revealed that some of the school going girls still did not use any sanitary napkins and there were no such facilities of disposing off the used napkins. Further most of the schools did not have the wending machines in Schools for the napkins. It was also revealed that though the ASHA Workers are distributing the napkins, but most of the women are still reluctant to use it.

The Women are not allowed to enter the kitchen or even have water from the clean pots. They are made to drink the tap waters from outside their domestic sphere. They are even not allowed to take bath during this period of time.

The learners discovered that most of the girls suffered from anaemia, lack of energy, urinary tract infection, white discharge, while the mothers reported that they had problems during pregnancy and they also find it difficult to cope up with the difficulties during Menopause .



The MSW learners from our university after getting a clear picture from the community performed a small play to project how harmful can the age old Menstrual practice can be. They also delivered lectures on Good practice in this regard.

The participants including the mothers were encouraged to asked questions, some of the few questions which came up were- what should be the diet of an adolescent girls, what should be

the right way to dispose off the napkins etc. One of the ASHA worker in her speech encouraged the girls to visit the primary health clinics without any hesitation.

Thus the learners shared that the girls who were not comfortable in speaking about their problems could now talk about it without any inhibitions and even their mothers supported them to frankly discuss these matters with the ASHA workers.

Thus the outreach programme ended successfully.

28th June 2019

Outreach Programme at Nari O Shish Kalyan Kendra, Bouriya, Howrah on “Effects of Child Marriage”

The School of Professional Studies, Netaji Subhas Open University conducted an Outreach Programme on “Effects of Child Marriage” in Nari O Shish Kalyan Kendra, Bouriya, Howrah on 28th June 2019. The aim of this Outreach Programme was to sensitize the community, especially the adolescent boys and girls, who become easy victim to this social malice. Besides catering to the adolescent age group, the parents of these children were also included in the programme as they are the prime agents for controlling the incidence of Child marriage in our Community. It is a matter of great pleasure to share that one of the ex –learner of MSW course from Netaji Subhas Open University, Seuli Dutta, who is now a freelance trainer in the field of “Women & Child Rights “(batch 2017) was appointed to conduct sessions with the participants. Many interesting and innovative suggestions came up from amongst the participation at the end of the programme.

The participants of the programme were the students who were enrolled in various courses under Nari O Shish Kalyan Kendra, Bouriya along with their teachers. Most of the students were still going to colleges while some others were married and had children.

Three technical Sessions were conducted. In the first session a general discussion was taken up by Ms Seuli, to understand the knowledge and viewpoints of the participants about “Child Marriage and its ill effect”. It was interesting to note that even the young boys participated enthusiastically in the discussion along with the girls. They shared their ideas about the causes of child marriage, though there were some misconceptions about it. Followed by this there was a detailed discussion about the various pros and cons of child marriage and the legal provisions were also elaborately discussed. To our utter surprise some of the participants were not clear about the age of marriage of the bride and groom, rather they found it convenient for a girl to get married at an early age so that it would help them to adjust with the in laws and become accustomed to the customs and cultural life without any problem. However, there were some participants who were aware about the evils of Child Marriage and shared some of their experiences in this connection. The opinions as well as the queries of the participants were noted down very meticulously so that it may be answered in the later sessions.

In the second session two videos were presented which depicted why a girl should not be married off at an early age and what are the possible consequences of such marriages, and based on it there was a question answer session. Still there were a lot of ambiguities among the participants. However gradually with discussions and exchange of thoughts it seemed that the participants started developing some clarity on this issue and could answer most of the questions correctly.

Some of the participants, who became the victims of Child Marriage, volunteered to share some of their own experiences. They in turn warned the young teen aged girls to be aware of the

circumstances of early marriage and be prepared to protest against it they were forced by their parents. Meanwhile a girl stood up her own experience, and how she could save herself from getting married at a tender age.

In the final session, the participants were divided into ten groups, and performed a task to plan strategies to control child marriage through the “Chart Work”. At the end all the groups presented their strategies and it was amazing to notice that each and every group came up with innovative ideas to control the menace of Child Marriage.

A very interesting point which was raised by the participants was that not only girls but boys should also be sensitized in this regards. The group shared that the adolescent boys and girls may form task force and work as a team to check this social menace.

The participants said that the local governments must be responsible in combating this social problem. They also opined that police, NGOs and other lawyers must take such sessions particularly with the parents so that they may be sensitized about the ill effects of Child marriage.



Finally a session was exclusively organized for the staff of Nari-O-Shishu Kalyan Kendra, who work in the field level, to aware them about the “The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006” and some techniques were also discussed while working with the community in this particular issue. The staff of the organization requested to discuss in detail about the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006. They were also keen to know how Social Work methods may be applied in combating this problem. The staff narrated their experiences, about an incidence of Child Marriage where the young mother who was 17 years of age became critical and was in desperate need of medical attention but was unable to avail the facility of the Government

Scheme “ Janani Surakhsha Yojna” due to her age, however they were able to save her life with the help of some local people.

The President of the NGO proposed vote of thanks and the programme was concluded with the hope that the community as well as the Staff would work hand in hand to curve the social problem of “Child Marriage”.

The Outreach Programme could at least enabled the young teenaged girls to prepare themselves to boldly against Early Marriages.