

Theme: Awareness on Women's Menstrual Hygiene

Village: Bonerpukur Danga

Date: 13-06-2025

Description of the Activity

As part of a fieldwork placement, a student social worker implemented a community-based awareness initiative focusing on menstrual hygiene management among women and adolescent girls in the Santal community of Bonerpukur danga village, Bolpur. The primary objective was to address the lack of awareness, challenge stigma, and promote safe and healthy menstrual practices. All activities were carried out in a culturally sensitive, participatory manner, guided by the values of empowerment and social justice.

The first phase involved conducting a baseline survey to assess existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices regarding menstruation within the community. Through household visits and informal interviews, the student collected valuable insights into menstrual hygiene habits, sources of information, and the difficulties faced by women and girls. Key issues identified included the use of unclean cloths, limited availability of sanitary pads, inadequate disposal methods, and deep-rooted cultural taboos.

To address these concerns, the student organized awareness sessions with adolescent girls and women. Visual aids, flip charts, and simple language in the local dialect were used to ensure the content was easily understood. The sessions covered topics such as the menstrual cycle, personal hygiene, correct use of sanitary products, safe disposal techniques, and maintenance of reusable materials. Myths and misconceptions—such as food restrictions, movement limitations, and ideas of impurity—were addressed through open dialogue, encouraging participants to share their own experiences.

The student also facilitated small group discussions and peer education activities in nearby schools. Both girls and boys were engaged in these sessions to help reduce stigma and foster gender-sensitive understanding of menstruation. Teachers were encouraged to support menstrual health education as part of regular school health activities.

Recognizing the economic challenges in accessing sanitary products, the student collaborated with local NGOs and health workers to distribute affordable sanitary pads during the sessions. Demonstrations were conducted on how to use and dispose of them safely. In addition, the student helped identify and promote safe, private spaces within the village, especially in schools, where girls could manage their menstruation with comfort and dignity.

The student also worked closely with Anganwadi workers and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers, organizing joint awareness campaigns and conducting follow-up home visits. This collaborative approach aimed at ensuring continuity and sustainability of menstrual health promotion even after the completion of the fieldwork.

Throughout the project, the student maintained a respectful, inclusive approach—earning trust from community members while carefully introducing healthier alternatives that aligned with cultural sensitivities. Regular feedback was gathered to refine activities and make sure the intervention remained relevant and effective.

In conclusion, the student social worker's engagement in Bonerpukurdanga village played a vital role in enhancing menstrual hygiene awareness among Santal women and girls. Through education, dialogue, and collaboration, the initiative helped reduce stigma, promoted healthier practices, and contributed to the empowerment of women in the community.

Number of participants of the community: 24

Summary of the Activity:

The community organization initiative on menstrual hygiene awareness in the Santal village of Bonerpukurdanga, brought significant positive change among women and adolescent girls. Through interactive sessions and group discussions, participants gained essential knowledge about the menstrual cycle, hygiene practices, and the correct use and disposal of sanitary products. Many women who previously relied on unhygienic methods, such as old cloths, began adopting safer practices after understanding the health risks involved.

The initiative also focused on breaking cultural taboos and myths associated with menstruation. Women and girls were encouraged to share their experiences openly, helping to reduce feelings

of shame and isolation. Awareness sessions were conducted in the local language, ensuring better understanding and participation.

Access to low-cost sanitary pads was made possible through collaboration with local NGOs and health workers, addressing the economic barriers many faced. Demonstrations on product usage and disposal further enhanced practical knowledge.

Involvement of ASHA and Anganwadi workers helped strengthen community support and ensured the sustainability of the efforts. Overall, the program empowered women and girls to manage menstruation with dignity, improved hygiene practices, and fostered a supportive environment where menstruation is recognized as a natural and manageable part of life.

