

Mission
Bandhavi:
Session
Documentation

February 13th & 14th

2020



বান্ধবী আছে সাথে ।
ভয় নেই আর কোনো কিছতে ।



Anahat®



Mission Bhandhavi, a unique initiative taken by the Cooch Behar District Administration. The mission is being piloted in Dinhata Subdivision under the leadership of the SDO, Mr Shaikh Ansar Ahmad.

Background

Lack of knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene management in rural India leads to many socio economic issues like school dropout, absenteeism, lack of confidence and self-esteem, under representation in economic activities and health hazards like cervical cancer, UTI, shock, stress, shame and trauma.

The situation is worse in rural, socio economically backward and marginal district like Cooch Behar. Hence, considering the gravity and importance of this aspect of womens' health, the District Administration has decided to initiate a comprehensive, inclusive, and Community Led Menstrual Hygiene Management Mission called Bandhavi by using external resources and infrastructure. The objectives of the mission are-

- To provide Access to timely and accurate information regarding menstrual hygiene through existing infrastructure and resources
- To provide access to safe, affordable & environment friendly menstrual hygiene materials
- To break the silence around menstruation, sensitizing men, women and adolescents about menstruation and triggering them for behavioural change around the taboos and myths related to menstruation
- To generate and sustain awareness regarding menstrual hygiene
- To create an enabling environment through which menstrual health and hygiene can be managed with ease, comfort, dignity and without any shame
- To improve WASH facilities in school and other public places
- To generate livelihood opportunities for rural SHG women

Components of Bandhavi

- **Knowledge:** Girls and women to have accurate and timely knowledge of menstruation & hygiene practices & they are capable of managing menstruation
- **Services & Facilities:** Provision of WASH facilities in public places & providing all sorts of assistance through existing system/infrastructure.
- **Social Support:** Ending stigma, misconceptions, discrimination and exclusion & bringing in behavioural changes.
- **Access to menstrual material:** Providing access to affordable, reliable, safe & eco-friendly menstrual hygiene materials & popularizing the same to trigger demand and sustain the mission.

Stakeholders Involved



Under Mission Bandhavi, master training will be given to 3 Kanyashree Girls & a lady teacher per school, 2 SHG members per SANGHA, all ICDS supervisors PHNs etc to equip them to perform the role of Bandhavi Ambassadors. These ambassadors will organize regular workshops in their respective areas and also sell sanitary napkins at low cost. The existing infrastructure will be treated as Bandhavi Corners.

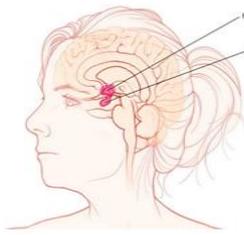
On 13th February, 2020, **Anahat For Change Foundation** conducted master training for 6 schools each represented by 1 lady teacher and 3 Kanyashree students, 3 block Development Officers, 3 Child Development Officers, 17 ICDS Supervisors, 5 PHN's and 3 NGO Coordinators of CDPO. On 13th Feb, we addressed a total audience of 55 Bandhavi Ambassadors. On 14th February we addressed an audience of 71 SHG members from 3 blocks of Dinahat. Both the days, session began at 11:30 am in the morning with the SDO setting the tone for the session by sharing about Mission Bandhavi and how the students, teachers, ICDS Supervisors, SHG's and PHN's were an important stakeholder and their co-operation is required to make the mission a success. He explained the role of each stakeholder and various facilities and services that will be provided to the students and teachers in the school premises and community members in the villages. He also addressed the crowd as Bandhavi Ambassadors and urged each and everyone present in the room to go through the roles and responsibilities of a Bandhavi Ambassador which were clearly mentioned in the manual distributed to them at the beginning of the session.



After the note from the SDO and setting of the tone, we began the training by requesting the participants to just spend 5 minutes of their time to fill up a questionnaire prepared by us. The questionnaire had basic questions to understand their present knowledge regarding menstruation, pre-menstrual syndrome and to check their perception regarding menstruation. The questions covered topics like nutrition, hygiene, PMS, myths and taboos. This activity was conducted to understand the current knowledge and quantify the level of understanding after the training ends.



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ছোটো গ্রন্থি
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পিটুইটারি গ্রন্থি
বলা হয়, এই গ্রন্থি
থেকে
নিঃ সারিভ
হরমোনের জন্য
বয়স্ক কালের
পরিবর্তন গুলি
লক্ষ্য করা যায়

The participants were then explained the reason behind physical changes in our body. The pituitary gland which is present at the back of our brain is responsible for secreting growth hormones which regulates growth and physical development. It can stimulate growth in almost all of our tissues. Its primary targets are bones and muscles.



The participants were then asked to divide themselves in 4 groups. They were given 10 minutes to discuss among themselves and note down points in a chart paper. One student from each group was invited on stage to read out the points in front of all the participants. For physical changes in girls, the group pointed out signs like, **development of breast, increase in height, weight around the hips, periods, change in voice, formation of pimples, hair in under arms, pubic hair etc.** For physical changes in boys, the group pointed out signs like- **change in voice, increase in height, weight, pimples, hair in under arms, intimate areas etc.**

For mental changes in boys and girls, the groups pointed out- **shyness, aloofness towards parents, attraction towards opposite gender, easily influenced by peer groups etc, restrictions at home for girls, chances of early marriage, chances of getting into bad company etc.**



Post discussing various effects of puberty and its impact on adolescent life, our facilitator delved into the topic of menstrual hygiene management. In order to understand MHM, the participants were explained how periods happen. For the purpose of demonstration, a uterus soft toy was used to show various parts of the uterus and explain the functioning of each part. The participants were explained how there are millions of eggs in the ovaries and each month an egg from either of the ovaries fertilize and finds its way into the uterus wall through a passage called fallopian tube. It waits in the uterus wall for a guest, sperm. Meanwhile the uterine tissues start forming a layer of blood which thickens over a period of time to support the development of the egg. When the guest doesn't arrive, the uterus lining started to shed taking the egg along with it in the form of periods.

The participants were made familiar with the menstrual cycle and how the uterus looks at each day of the month. The cycle explains the location of the egg and the thickness of the blood inside the uterus in each day of the month. The four stages of the cycle, which are, Menstrual Phase (Day 1 to Day 5), Follicular phase (Day 6 to Day 10), Ovulatory phase (Day 11 to Day 18) and Luteal Phase (Day 19 to Day 28). The participants were also explained that this cycle is particular only to someone with a 28 day period cycle. The dates of the cycle may vary depending upon the length of the period cycle.



After explaining the menstrual cycle, a small activity was conducted with the participants. A sheet was given to them with the outline of a uterus with four stages mentioned. They were asked to fill the uterus with a red sketch pen depending upon the phase mentioned alongside and also point out the location of the egg in each phase of the cycle. This activity was to check whether they have had a clear picture of the menstrual cycle.



Date calculation is an important aspect of menstruation. Young girls tend to miss school due to not being prepared for their cycle. The participants were explained how they can calculate the date of their next cycle. In order to know their dates they need to know the length of their cycle and the date of their last periods. The formula to calculate periods is $\text{First day of your last periods} + \text{length of the period cycle} = \text{First day of your next periods}$.



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After the date calculation, participants were explained how they can manage period pains and other symptoms related to menstruation. They were informed that they can reduce the instances of period pains by including simple practices like **drinking lots of water, eating green leafy vegetables, brisk walking and including certain yoga poses** which can help ease period pain.

Hygiene practices especially during menstruation is very important for women and girls. **Hygiene practices such as washing hand before and after changing intimate wear or sanitary pads, drying the clothes under direct sunlight, changing sanitary napkin every 6 hours, bathing at the time of periods, washing vagina from front to back and not back to front and always keeping an extra sanitary pad in your bags** were explained to the participants.



The participants were informed about various products available in the market. We believe in informed choice and providing all kinds of information regarding menstrual product choices available in the market. The participants were explained about menstrual cup, clothpads, disposable sanitary napkin, tampons etc. A demonstration was shown to them regarding cloth pads and menstrual cups. Advantages and disadvantages of each of the product were provided to them. The participants seemed very interested in products like cloth pads and cups. They had not heard about such a thing before. We received various follow up questions regarding the same.



Myths & Taboos

Towards the end of the training programme, we discussed various myths and taboos that the participants are impelled to follow in their daily lives during periods. After discussion, participants listed down taboos such as-

1. Not allowed to wash hair during periods
2. Have to take bath early in the morning before any of the family members wake up
3. Not allowed to pray or enter mandir during periods
4. Not allowed to enter the kitchen towards periods
5. Not allowed to serve food to the family members
6. Not allowed to enter cow-shed during periods
7. Considered impure and asked to stay aloof during periods



The girls were explained how menstruation is a biological process and it is normal for every women to bleed every month. It is not an impure blood. It is the same blood which forms a blanket around the baby in the womb and keeps the baby safe. If the mother is not considered impure when pregnant or when they are delivering, why should a menstruating women or girl be considered impure during those 5 days in a month. The students were also introduced to Busting Myths & Taboos Sankes & Ladder game designed by Anahat For Change Foundation. The Ambassadors were explained how to play the game and how to explain various myths and taboos to the girls. This game could be kept in the Bandhavi Corner in every school.



The participants were introduced to a myth busting Snakes & Ladder game which will form a part of their IEC material in the 2nd phase of the project. They were explained how the game works and they can play this game with young students which will help them break myths like it is okay to pray during periods, they should use a clean sanitary napkin, they can take bath during periods, they need to eat iron rich food during periods etc.

At the last leg of the training, participants were asked to fill the post assessment questionnaire. This is the same questionnaire that they had filled at the beginning if the training. This time they felt confident about their answers after gaining the required knowledge. They were also asked to give us a feedback in a piece of paper. The feedback could have anything about the training, what else they would like to add or change about the training. We received a very positive feedback regarding Mission Bandhavi and the training they recieved over 2 days.



At the end of Day 4, the participants were visited by the District Magistrate of Cooch Behar, Shri Pawan Kadyan accompanys by Shri Shaikh Ansar Ahmad. The DM congratulated the audience for being a part of the Bandhavi Project and also ensured them continuos support going forward. He seemed satisfied with the knowledge gained by the participants and heard some of them talk about the training they have received.

One of the SHG members shared that she is MA passed out but she did not know that the blood coming out during periods is a pure blood, she was always nder the assumption that it was impure blood. It was only because of the master training did she get to break the myth she was living under.

