

## **Girls overcome myths, Adopt Menstrual Hygiene Management**

The studies show that hesitation created due to social barriers, taboos and myths and lack of sanitation and hygiene hinder the girls to address the menstrual periods. Coming to the schools, there are most of the schools which lack sanitation and hygiene. The results in such cases are very much evident. Dropout of the girls when they become adolescent, lack of knowledge on menstrual hygiene leading to prolonged health disorders and diseases. Interventions made under project Prajwala, were able to overcome myths and adopt Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) as Adolescent Girls Group became functional. Project Prajwala is a joint initiative of National Stock Exchange Foundation and Rajasthan Elementary Education Council, being implemented by Centre for Environment Education (CEE) as knowledge and implementation partner and UNICEF as technical partner.

In KGBV, Bhandari, located in Sikray Block of Dausa district, adolescent girls were hesitant to disclose the onset of menses because they consider it a taboo. Any health repercussions were hardly reported to the warden and batch mates. Although sanitary pad incinerator was functional, unsafe disposal of the pads was prominent practice. Hand washing was not practiced before and after going to the toilets.

When the girls kept mum, Arti Bherwa, a class VIII student, stood to take a lead role in breaking the silence. A young leader in action who became the Prime Minister of the Adolescent Girls Group has motivated other girls to report the menstrual period and practice hygiene during the menstrual cycle.

During the school sessions organised under the programme, she was oriented to form and monitor the Adolescent Girls Group. She was oriented to look after the responsibilities of the Ministers of the group – Food minister for dietary constituents intake by the girls, Sanitation Minister for ensuring sanitation maintained in the toilets, Hygiene Minister to look after cleanliness around the toilet blocks and measures to be followed, Water Minister for ensuring availability of water in the school premises.

Session on MHM like body organ mapping, changes in adolescent age, menstrual cycle, myths, proper practices for menstrual hygiene, health and nutrition encouraged them to speak up on the changes occurring in the body of adolescent girls and boys. The aim is to know the body organs which girls can figure out once they face problem or health disorder. They are told that these changes are natural changes which happen with every person. So, there is nothing to be shy to report for menstrual cycle.

“The safe disposal of the pads is another aspect of ensuring hygiene”, Arti tells the girls during the Adolescent Girls Groups meetings. She further tells, “girls to wrap up the used pads with the wrapper provided inside the packet of the pad. The safe disposing practice need to be followed before reaching to electric incinerator. Used newspaper is also the option to wrap up the pad. The practice cuts off the contact of the bad odour with the environment.”

Now, girls experiencing the monthly menstrual periods reports to her. Girls have overcome shyness to express onset of periods. Safe disposal of the pad is ensured by wrapping up the sanitary pads in the paper and then burning in incinerator. Balance diet is ensured as every girl takes milk, and all meals with full diet.

Prime Minister says, “There is no hesitation in reporting menstrual period from the girls. I provide girls with sanitary pads when they report to me.” She adds, “I regularly ensure the availability of the waste papers for safe disposal of the pads. During my monitoring I have observed that girls are discussing on the hygienic measures followed during the menstrual periods.”



**A girl from Adolescent Girls Group of KGBV, Bhandari displaying safe disposal of sanitary pads. Papers used for wrapping up pads and incinerator in use.**