



BLEED WITH PRIDE

Women and girls make up half of India's population, but persistent gender disparities across health, education, nutrition and employment keep them in a chronically disadvantageous position. More than 70% of girls in India have no knowledge of menstruation before their menarche. In India roughly 12% of menstruating women use sanitary napkins and remaining Indian women cannot afford pads and instead use unhygienic substances such as newspaper, sand, ash, leaves, mud or unsterilized clothes/rags, leading to serious health hazards. One of the biggest reasons of not using sanitary napkins is its prohibitive cost.

'Bleed with Pride' campaign has been formulated to reach out to the community and to talk about menstruation openly towards better understanding of it like any other natural body cycle. It is aimed at empowering women, young girls and community to stand together and fight taboos, stigma and discrimination. Through the free distribution of reusable menstruation kits the District Administration enables to make every girl who has

reached puberty, bleed with pride safely and in a hygienically. The cause has been taken up as a **Jan Andolan**, so that the community stands together to make the young girls stay motivated and inspired.

This cause has converges various key areas of human upliftment i.e. health, hygiene, nutrition, education and awareness, dispelling social/cultural barriers, women upliftment, economic independence, state and national vision entwined with India's commitment towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. There have been a lot of impediments at the onset including non-availability of funds, adequate support and guidance mechanism. However, opportunities reveal themselves to every problem.

The approach transcended all sections of society as conceptualised. For such a campaign to bear fruit not only support and acceptability, but a willing desire to selflessly contribute to the cause must arise in one and all. A sound strategy with focus on identification, convergence, procurement, detailed menstrual hygiene management action plan for workshop sessions and exhaustive



distribution plan was formulated.

The campaign was converged, and launched with *Beti Bachao Beti Padho/ Poshan Maah/ Eat Right Campaign/ Swachh Bharat Abhiyan/ Fit India Campaign/ Free Anemia Campaign/ Mid-Day Meals/ Mental Health for Adolescents etc.*

A deal was struck with Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust, Mooncatcher Project, USA and Global Shapers. Mapping of government schools was done which identified 5000 girl students studying in class 6 to 12 hailing from very humble background. Meaningful impact was ensured through interactive and detailed educative sessions at the schools. Menstrual hygiene

management workshops / distribution of sanitary pads was undertaken in 10 assembly constituencies of Imphal East reaching out to more than 10000 participants. The snow balling effect has trickled down 'Bleed with Pride' to the general masses through direct participants and mediums like Anganwadi Workers/Helpers by incorporating 'Bleed with Pride' objectives in their activities.

A total of 5000 kits (containing an underwear with adjustable strings with pad-holders and 3 reusable pads, per kit) were procured under CSR and distributed free of cost. Each reusable pad had a life span of 2 years. Most of the beneficiaries were from economically weakest sections of the society.

The reusable pads are very comfortable to the girls and as a result, attendance in government schools covered under this programme improved and dropout rate is likely to decrease. The foot print of this campaign on the hearts and minds of the young generation has been phenomenal. Few of such first-hand experiences are as follows:

- “We now know what freedom is. We actually do not have to be mentally under any pressure”. – **Freedom Attained**
- “Why can't I have one more kit, I have two other sisters at home” – **Family Bonding Nourished**
- “Ma'am will you be coming again next month” – **Hope Kindled**
- “Ma'am my father and brother now allow me to have meals with them”. – **Childhood Blessed**
- “Before this awareness programme I could not attend school properly due to lack of money to buy sanitary pad. This programme gave me courage to share my pain to my father and brother. It destroys my shy”. – **Character Building with Inner Resolve.**

Happiness, self esteem and confidence, participative and self-inclusion attitude, emotional quotient, will to compete with the male counterparts as equals, reduced incidence of abuse amongst poor school girls, reduced incidence of infections/health complications,



dispelling taboos and myths are some of the valuable outcomes which lead to holistic growth and development of girls. 'Bleed with Pride' campaign has succeeded in catching the young girls and boys to be change agents.

The World Economic Forum has recognized 'Bleed with Pride' initiative in Imphal East as one of the impactful projects under 'Equity and Inclusion' in the Global Shapers Summit 2020. A common voice has risen- "It's okay to bleed. It's okay to be a girl. It's okay to be a Woman". Not only did it unite the female gender, it united the community.

