

A SHOT OF HOPE BEACONS OF HOPE

Cycle of change: NGO's lessons on menstrual health to streetkids

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PANKHURI.YADAV@TIMESGROUP.COM

New Delhi:

On Menstrual Hygiene Day on Friday, an NGO educated girls living in slums on good hygiene while managing the menses. Sanitary pads were also distributed to girls in Shakurbasti and Valmiki camp in west Delhi. Meanwhile, a few other organisations observed the day by holding similar sessions for girls in Covid clusters in the city.

After distributing menstruation kits adequate for the next three months to more than 100 girls in two west Delhi localities, Sanjay Gupta, director, Chetna, said, "Our menstrual hygiene kits aim to spread awareness about cleanliness and health related to the menses. We want girls to break their silence on the issue and provide them with sustainable access to appropriate products."

A 16-year-old girl living in a congested slum had been compelled to use pieces of old cloth every month for the past four years as taught by her mother. When she came in contact with Chetna, she became aware of the health issues around periods. Gradually, she also learnt about the taboos associated with menstrual health.

Another cheerful 16-year-old girl, a Noida slum resident, was completely unaware of what her body was going through when she had her first period. She said that whenever she got her periods, her mother asked her not to do any household chores, putting superstition over biology. But when she started studying at Chetna's education centre and learnt about the natural bodily discharge, she was eager to teach others about it and about the importance of hygiene and the need of proper consultation in case of severe stomach pain or other problems.

Gupta pointed out how women had suffered for ages because of myths about menstruation, such as women shouldn't be allowed into the kitchen or a

shrine when having periods, or even

touch anything. “Menstrual hygiene practices are structured by cultural norms and socio-economic pressures in slum areas,” said Gupta. “We realised that providing a sanitary pad was just one part of dealing with the issue. Creating a change in mindset is the main challenge, and through education we are empowering girls to fight the stigma related to menstruation.”



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