

A Comprehensive Life Course Approach towards Prevention in the Slums of Kolkata

Ananya Chatterjee

“It is better to light one candle than sit in the dark”

Mission of Calcutta Rescue

The strength of Calcutta Rescue is to focus on the people who are helped by nobody and to “rescue” people from the consequences of ill-health, illiteracy, and poverty. This includes providing qualitative healthcare and education for urban slum children and provide development of skills which would ultimately lead to employment opportunities and a stable income.

Prevention is better than cure

We strongly believe in it and it is a human right of all people to decide if, when and with whom to have sex, and when to have children – free from discrimination, coercion, and violence.

We run programmes on holistic development of adolescent girls and gender equality programme for the boys. All these boys and girls are our students who receive support in nutrition and education from their childhood throughout their



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What we do-

Our mental health counsellor and social workers conduct sessions **with the adolescent group of students** at regular intervals to talk about sexual and reproductive health and thus we educate the vulnerable adolescents about sex, sexuality, and fertility.

- In a country like India, talking about sex, sexuality and fertility is not very easy with family members or in the formal schools. Young adolescent groups are mostly half-informed or wrongly informed by the friends. There are many myths and taboos in the society related to sex and sexuality.
- We address these issues at our centres as we believe that good sexual and reproductive health is a state of complete mental, physical and social well-being.

My body, my rights

We generate conversation by showing dolls with clear genitals so that students know the right names of the organs.

We sensitize the boys and girls right from their childhood about ‘good touch’ and ‘bad touch’.

Our students know how to raise voice if they are inappropriately touched.



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Menstrual hygiene: Bursting period myths

There are many myths regarding menstrual cycle, pregnancy and menstrual hygiene against which our social worker and mental health counsellor work closely with adolescent girls and their mothers. Sessions are conducted by resource persons like doctors, health workers every month.



Tackling PMS of daughters

Ranu's mother used to think before that Ranu used to throw tantrum just to seek attention and to avoid household chores but now she realizes that Ranu suffers from PMS.

Girls and their mothers both are counselled at our centres to tackle PMS. They are advised to bring necessary changes in the lifestyle and thought process. Many mothers admitted that they never thought of bringing such changes as they learnt wrong things from their mothers or grandmothers or other senior members in the family.



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Daughters need education, not early marriage

Education is a protective factor against child marriage.

When girls and their mothers are educated they develop knowledge, confidence and negotiation skills to assert when, whether and whom to marry.

We take help of puppets to tell stories, take help of 'patachitra' singers and our students take part in street-plays to sensitize communities, mothers and other adolescent girls to spread this message. A whole lot of other activities are conducted every week after the regular academic classes for sensitizing the students and sometimes their parents and their immediate communities.

Street-play, puppet shows, patachitra and videos as tools



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Intensive workshop on body, sexual health and rights

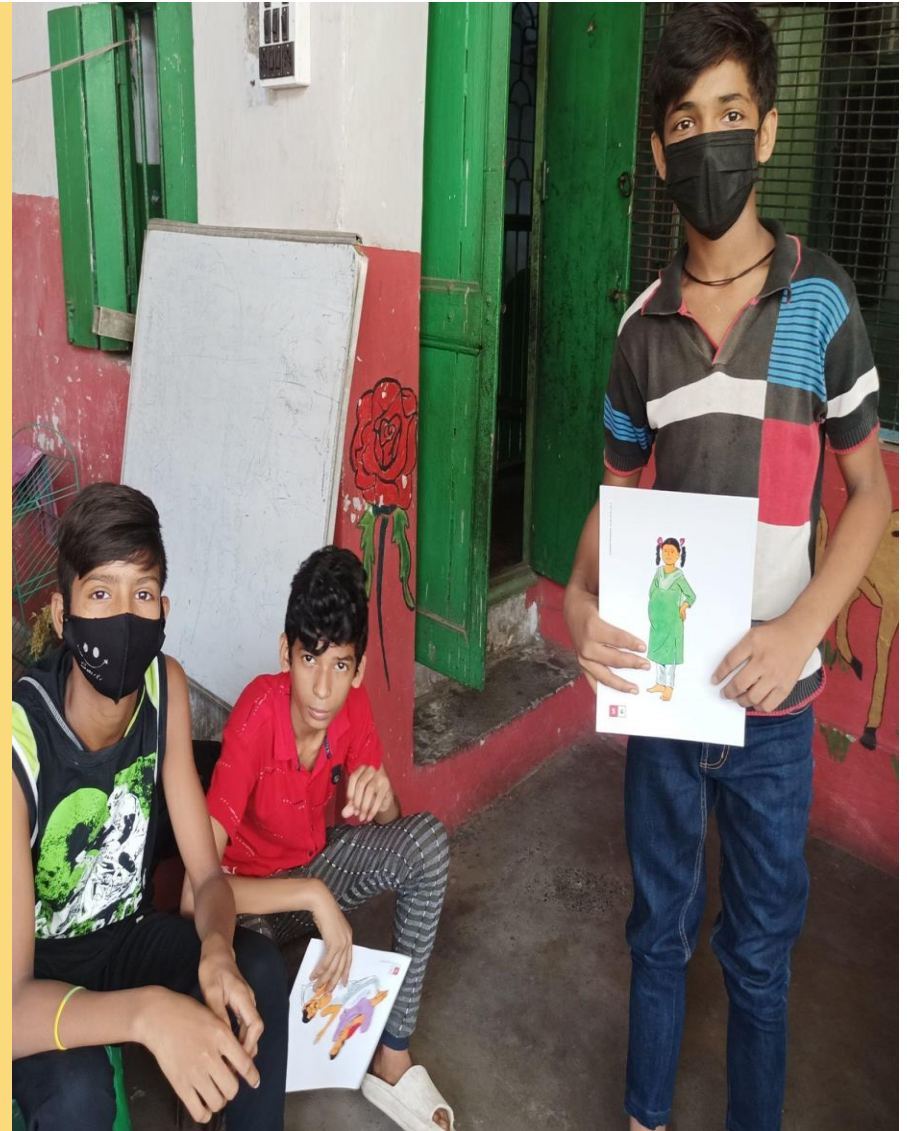
Mental Health problems can be result of concurrent or past Sexual and Reproductive Health ill event and vice versa.



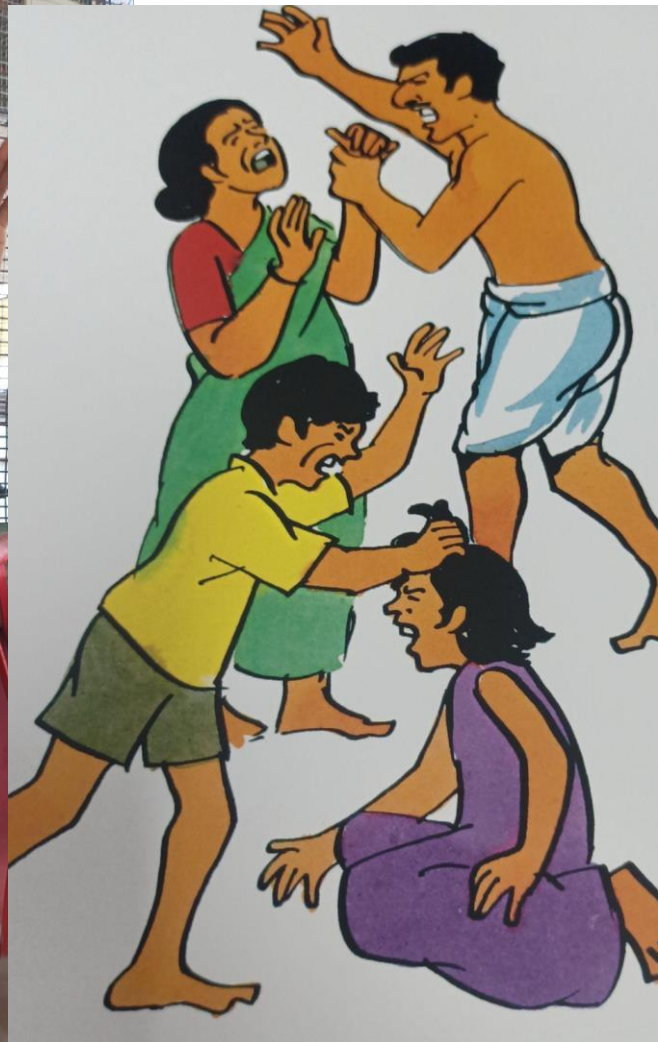
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Addressing Gender issues

- **As** a part of gender equality programme we have taken different initiatives:
- Resource person sensitizing about gender issues
- Monthly gender sensitization sessions for boys
- Customized resource materials particularly based
- Target based interventions for boys
- Regular parents interactions and workshops



Sensitization with dumb charade , enactment, picture cards on violence on women



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Community health workers and social workers survey



▶ *“It is better to light one candle than sit in the dark”*

Changing agents

We have a team of senior boys and girls who worked hand in hand with us. They are provided required training how to talk, what to talk and with whom to talk in their immediate community.



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Parent council members

We have 1-2 parents from each area who are really smart and they help us to know the latest information about their immediate communities.

We believe that Mental Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) forms an integral part of overall health and well-being of an individual. Different phases and changes in sexual and reproductive behavior can play an important role in determining and shaping Mental Health status and vice-versa



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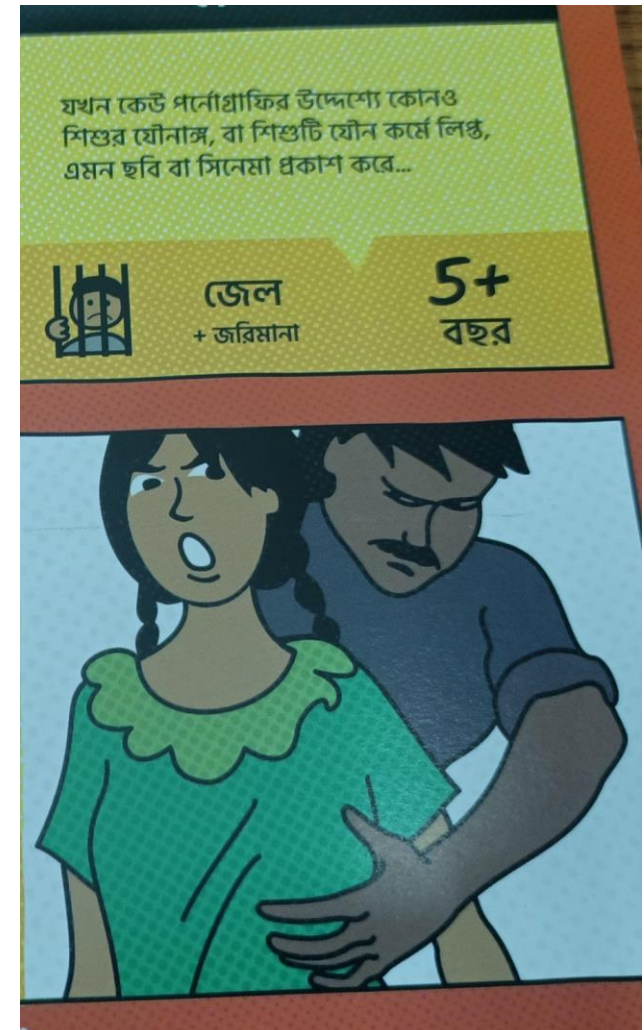
Sania's story

Violence against women can happen in any age, It can happen at outside and even at home. Abusers can be outsiders or may be own relatives.

15 years old Sania couldn't believe that she would experience mental trauma because of the emotional and cyber sexual abuse from her own relative.

Sania (name changed) is a happy go lucky girl, extremely bright and good at academics, drama, extra curricular activities. Few months back she completely broken down mentally and sought help from School counsellor. She feared that no body would believe her words.

Sania actually identified the red flags of abuse and was seeking help from someone she trusts. Now, she is peacefully living her life as her parents and she were counselled.



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